PC GAMER

STAR WARS™ EPISODE I THE PHANTOM MENACE™

IT'S THE GAME THE WORLD'S BEEN WAITING FOR.
FULL REVIEW INSIDE!

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TIPPED!
X-WING ALLIANCE
ALIEN vs PREDATOR
CIV: CALL TO POWER

ALSO REVIEWED!
HIDDEN AND DANGEROUS
CRICKET WORLD CUP 99
MECHWARRIOR 3
FLEET COMMAND
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STREET WARS
TANKTICS
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PC GAMER

Issue 71 July 1999

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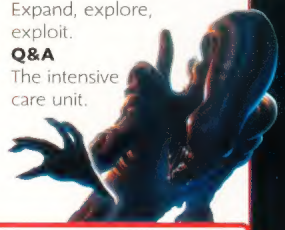

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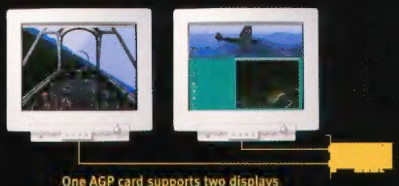

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HELLO THERE!

Anyone who says that Los Angeles is glamorous has either never been there, or has no experience of glamour outside of their favourite nite spot in south central Milton Keynes. Put simply, the whole city consists of mile upon mile of suburban desolation; a human cataclysm that rivals a 50-Megaton nuclear blast in its power to create wasteland. There is considerably more glamour in Clacton.

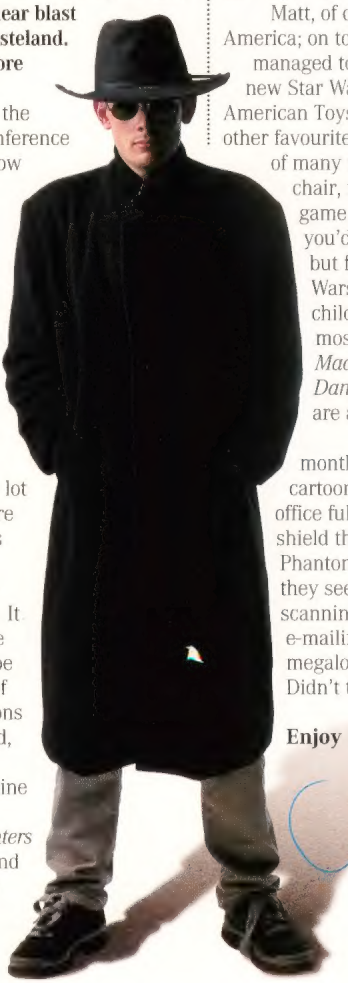
Fortunately, inside the city's air-conditioned conference centre, this year's E3 show managed to expunge LA's urban degradation from the minds of its delegates. Every year the entire computer games industry gathers together in one place to show off their wares, and despite having chosen to descend on LA, the whole event was a roaring success. While a lot of the newest games were kept under wraps, it was good to see so many publishers producing so many top quality games. It may be a mark of a more mature attitude, or maybe just that after 20 years of practice some hard lessons have finally been learned, but the vast majority of games we saw had genuine potential. Perhaps the mutant colony of *Ed Hunters* (reviewed on page 98) and their ilk have decided to hide in the shadows before lumbering their way onto the market, but we'd like to think that in future our reviewing snouts will sift through far fewer turds on their way to a genuine truffle. Take a look at the *Half-Life: Opposing Force*, *Rogue Spear* and *Conflict Freespace* Scoops as well as most of the games in this month's EyeWitness to see what we mean.

If you're wondering about the photo, by the way, turn to page 58.

Matt, of course, had a great time in America; on top of all the new games at E3 he managed to get the scoop on all the brand new Star Wars toys currently packing American Toys R Us and many of his other favourite boutiques. He's been the envy of many with his Darth Maul inflatable chair, for instance. The Episode 1 game (reviewed on page 68) is, well, you'd best take a look for yourselves, but for those of us for whom Star Wars has remained merely a fond childhood memory, this month's most exciting releases are *Midtown Madness* (page 84) and *Hidden And Dangerous* (page 74), both of which are absolutely fantastic.

The most fun I've had this month concerns the Episode 1 cartoon novel from Titan Books. In an office full of people desperately trying to shield themselves from knowing The Phantom Menace's story-line before they see it for themselves, I've been scanning a few choice pictures and e-mailing them out day by day. The megalomania's setting in already. Didn't take long did it?

Enjoy the issue



James Ashton
Editor

SCOOP!

Your first look at...

CONFLICT FREESPACE 2

X-Wing's one real rival returns.

By KIERON GILLEN

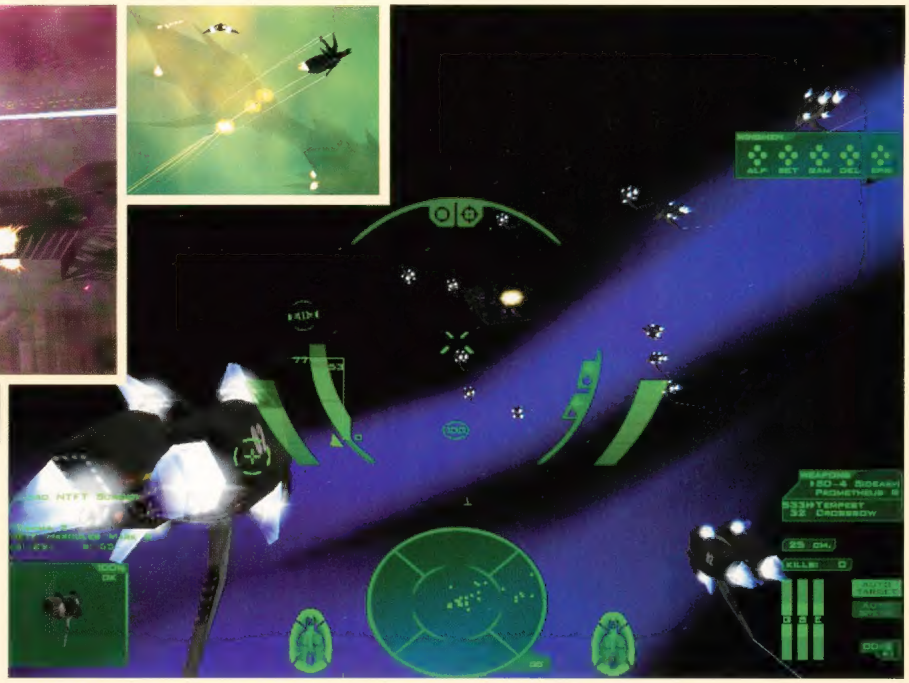
(Right) Another successful strike run comes to a conclusion.

Strangely poetic. Strangely green, but strangely poetic too.

THEY'LL BE NO CONFLICT IN YOUR HEART ABOUT THIS BECAUSE...

- It's the sequel to one of the best space sims of all time.
- It's full of gloomy electrostatic nebulae-based dogfights.
- It's got ships larger than a particularly fat American.
- It'll be a welcome respite from The Phantom Menace hype.

DEVELOPER	VOLITION	GENRE	SPACE FLIGHT COMBAT
UK PUBLISHER	VIRGIN	RELEASE DATE	NOVEMBER



(Above) Looking out from her cable car, Mildred, age 56, had a most horrifying surprise.

AS the posh French lady says in the advert, size matters. Especially when we're talking about PC games. The appearance of the Death Star was as important to *X-Wing Alliance*'s beauty as the Millennium Falcon. And if there's one area that the original space-combat *Freespace* excelled, it was that of sheer, gargantuan *size*. Who could forget the desperate space battles against the screen-filling forms of enemy capital ships? Remember the Lucifer superdestroyer? That was a big girl, wasn't it?

Step closer. Let me whisper in your ear. Say the words you long to hear: *Conflict Freespace 2* has got bigger. Considerably bigger. Take, for example, the new juggernauts. Twice as big perhaps? Maybe three times? Nope. We're talking about a piece of death-encrusted metal that's *ten times* larger than the ones you previously faced. That's six kilometres of destruction with plenty of empty real-estate for its sixty player-pulverising turrets to sit (which now include flak guns and beam weapons). Suffice to say she's harder than you, *boy*.

Lucky you've brought friends along, then. The wingman ordering system has been improved, allowing you to give direct commands to up to eleven comrades, each of whom possess improved AI. At least you won't be dying alone. And, for the first time, you get to fly alongside Vasudan wings (you may remember that they were your original enemies in the first game, until the more powerful Shivans turned up, forcing you to join sides with your previous foe). Interestingly, in some missions you slide inside the cocoon-like cockpit of a Stealth Fighter and mark capital ships for destruction with TAG (Target Acquisition and Guidance) missiles.

It recycles the impressive 3D engine of the original, but looks even finer due to *Freespace* being a pure acceleration-card-only game. This means that hardware features can be fully utilised; which, for example, will greatly increase the polygon count of opponents. This is essential for the game-defining nebulae (have a nose at the 'Steamy windows' bit).

Multi-player has been dusted down and smartened up for the sequel too. Up to twelve players can enter free-for-all dogfights or team-based melee. The Parallax Online server can be used for matching players together appropriately, while recording the number of kills and working out official rankings. There's even a continuing league where whole squadrons' results are recorded and extrapolated into a campaign, like the *Total Annihilation* Boneyards system.

The original *Conflict Freespace* managed to mix the beauty of the *Wing Commander* titles with the underlying game of *X-Wing*. The sequel looks likes it's doing the same. We're waiting with bated breath and 3D cards at the ready. PCG

"PIECES OF DEATH-ENCRUSTED METAL TEN TIMES LARGER THAN THE ONES YOU PREVIOUSLY FACED."

In space no-one can hear you... green.

STEAMY WINDOWS

Nebulae: Clouds of space gas, full of lightning storms and (if Star Trek is anything to go by) ravening aliens. Not good things to fly through. Except most of *Conflict Freespace 2* is set within their nebulous forms, changing the whole strategic make-up and keeping the game fresh for veterans of the Great War.

See? How are we supposed to fight in this? The reduced visibility makes ambush tactics incredibly important, especially because communication is impaired too. Imagine this sliding out of the mist.

COMING SOON!

We'll have more news on *Conflict Freespace 2* in our Latest On section in a few months.

DEVELOPER FILE

Name: Volition

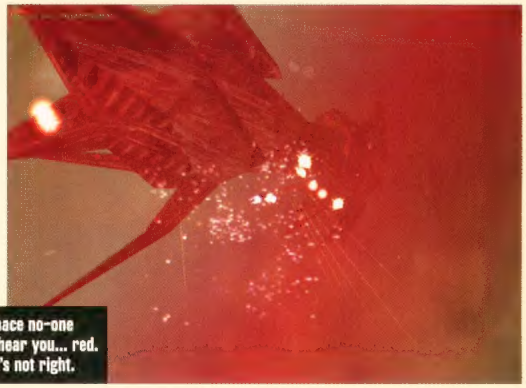
Country of Origin: USA

Established: 1996

Team Size: 30+

Background: Founded when Mike Kulas split from Parallax software. He took the development of *Freespace* with him. His new team finished it. It was great.

Previous Games: *Conflict Freespace* was their first, but most of the team worked on *Descent 1* and *2*.



In space no-one can hear you... red. That's not right.

SCOOP!

Your first look at...

HALF-LIFE: OPPOSING FORCE

Finished *Half-Life?* Forget it. *Opposing Force* is going to scare you to death. All over again.

By MATTHEW PIERCE

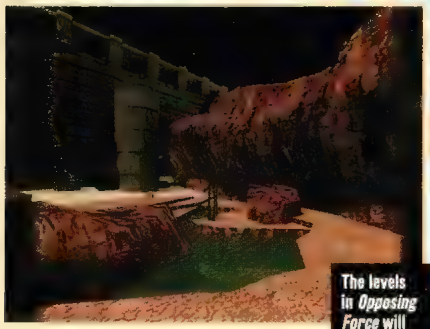
The new, slightly more portly Security Guard model freezes in the face of danger.

OPPOSING FORCE WILL TAKE OVER YOUR (HALF) LIFE BECAUSE...

- It adds to both the single- and multi-player elements of the game.
- You get to play as an enemy soldier this time round.
- There are seven new weapons and loads more allied characters.
- You'll get to kill the beardy one once and for all.

DEVELOPER	GEARBOX SOFTWARE	GENRE	ACTION
UK PUBLISHER	SIERRA	RELEASE DATE	AUTUMN

The Wrench isn't much use against the new X-race.



The levels in *Opposing Force* will be similar in style to those of the original.

HOW do you fancy wiping the smile off Gordon Freeman's face forever?

Yeah, us too. *Half-Life* was by far the best game of last year, but whoever was responsible for giving the hero a terrible goatee and NHS specs should just resign gracefully. Gearbox Software (the majority of whom used to make up Rebel Boat Rocker) evidently understand this, and have chosen to tell the *Half-Life* tale from a different perspective – that of one of the soldiers sent in to cover-up the accident. Freeman's therefore history. Until you can catch up with him anyway...

Playing as a merciless killing machine rather than an innocent worker naturally involves taking out all opposition. However, in a bid to ensure the game's trademark cinematic style remains in place, NPCs such as the scientists and security guards won't simply be used for target practice. The clever thing about *Opposing Force* is that while your character would never be described as a goodie, he needs the help of the Black Mesa employees as much as Freeman ever did. This means just as many puzzles to overcome while navigating the ruined complex and loads of scripted sequences featuring the white coats getting eaten alive. Allies also take the form of other soldiers – the beret-sporting drones, gas-masked marines and a new Drill Sergeant are all on hand to lend covering fire and, in the latter case, training.

"PLAY AS A MERCILESS KILLING MACHINE RATHER THAN AN INNOCENT WORKER."

The aliens haven't been ignored either. Thanks to the events of the original game (Freeman accidentally opening the slipgate), there are plenty of brand new creatures roaming the environments. Only one was implemented in the version we saw – bearing some resemblance to *Quake's* fiend – but Gearbox claim they'll be creating adversaries every bit as terrifying as the original's, as well as redesigning all the weapons too.

The seven tools at your disposal include both redesigned favourites and completely new examples. The hand-to-hand weapon changes from a crowbar to a wrench, an improved handgun replaces the Glock, and you're now able to use the alien barnacles as weapons. The use for these is two-fold – you can either shoot some poor unfortunate with it and watch as it drags them into its jaws, or employ it as a grappling hook – a quick and easy way of negotiating previously impassable areas.

As far as multi-player *Half-Life* action goes, Valve seem to be taking care of that in *Team Fortress 2*; however, *Opposing Force* will have its fair share of deathmatch levels, many of which will be designed by what are being referred to as 'star mappers.' Only Levelord's contribution has so far been revealed, although we're hoping that Valve have a hand in a few themselves.

It's refreshing to discover that this mission pack will concentrate on looking at the original game from a slightly different perspective, rather than simply adding a few extra monsters and weapons. The *Half-Life* phenomenon looks set to continue... PCG

COMING SOON!

Hopefully, we'll be bringing you a more in-depth look at *Opposing Force* next month.

DEVELOPER FILE

Name: Gearbox

Country of Origin: USA

Established: 1997

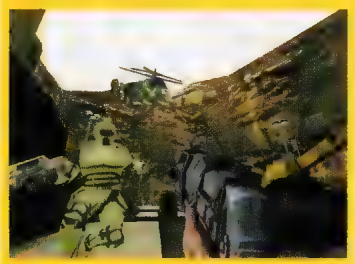
Team Size: 10+

Background: Founded by a number of employees from 3D Realms and other developers noted for their first-person shooters.

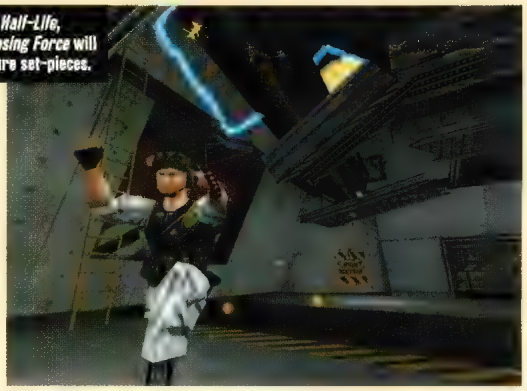
Previous games: Only *Prax War* under the Rebel Boat Rocker name. And that never saw the light of day.

ROCKING THE BOAT

When Rebel Boat Rocker closed its developmental doors after a much-publicised split with EA, it was thought by some that their days were numbered. Their first-person shooter, *Prax War*, was scrapped – but now they've bounced back with a vengeance, and landed themselves the job of creating the first official mission pack for the best game of last year. Not a bad comeback really. *Prax War* was always a promising game, scuppered by lack of time and funds. Hopefully, *Opposing Force's* birth will be far easier.



Prax War's game engine was as sophisticated as anything else at the time. Unfortunately, over-ambition, and the age-old killer (missed deadlines) convinced EA to drop it just before release. Boo.



Like *Half-Life*, *Opposing Force* will feature set-pieces.

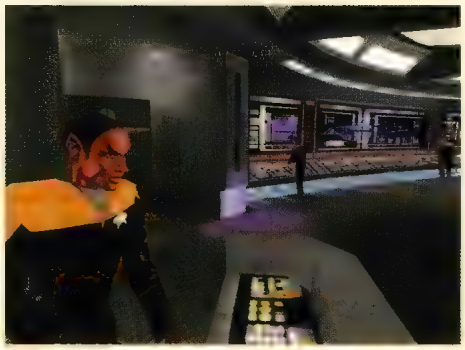
SCOOP!

Your first look at...

STAR TREK VOYAGER

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away... Hang on, that's not right.

By KIERON GILLEN



STAR TREK VOYAGER WILL GO WHERE NO GAME HAS GONE BEFORE BECAUSE...

- It's a first-person Star Trek shooter with you as a good guy.
- It accurately recreates the real Voyager sets.
- It's the first game to use the *Quake III* engine. Apart from *Quake III*.
- Tuvok will give everyone a Vulcan death grip if they don't buy it.

DEVELOPER	RAVEN	GENRE	FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
UK PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION	RELEASE DATE	FEBRUARY 2000

A forgetful commander forgot the "At ease" order.

Why should I smile for the camera, Captain?

SPACE – THE FINAL FRONTIER. It's a phrase you should re-acquaint yourself with, because Star Trek games are the flavour of the season. Which, of course, means plenty of bald men (with or without wigs) and people with pasties on their heads. *Star Trek Voyager*'s different, though: it features a woman with a pseudo-bouffant hairdo.

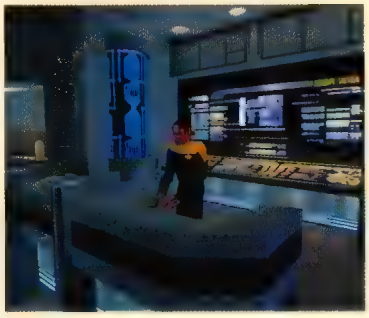
And, on a note more relevant to the world of gaming, the *Quake III* engine. Why? Because this, the first game based around the most recent Star Trek TV franchise, is being developed by the assorted bods at Raven Studio, legendary for their close relationship with those at the Id coding-bunker. True Trekkies may note the irony of there being an episode of Voyager called The Raven. We really wouldn't know.

The game, which is either to be subtitled *Elite Force* or, rather less glamorously, *Hazard Team*, is a first-person shooter, with you playing a security guard under the command of Lieutenant Turok the Hunter. *(Stop lying. – Trekkie Reader)* All right: Lieutenant Tuvok, that devastatingly logical Vulcan sort. The sheer attention to detail should separate this from the many other Star Trek games, which can occasionally wander too near to being 'inspired' rather than converting the actual material. Have a look at the box on the left for elaboration.

While you start off with a mere ruck with a few pesky interstellar pirates named, imaginatively, 'The Scavengers', the plot soon starts to wind towards an inevitable conflict with the obvious-metaphor-for-some-society-or-another, The Borg. You'd be correct in assuming that their adaptive abilities make them rather tricky foes to conquer, requiring constant modulation of your phaser beams to be effective. Lucky there's an 'I-Mod' self-altering beam to locate somewhere, letting you pummel the grisly foe with unrelenting beams of protons. Or whatever sub-atomic particles those phaser things actually fire. Hurrah.

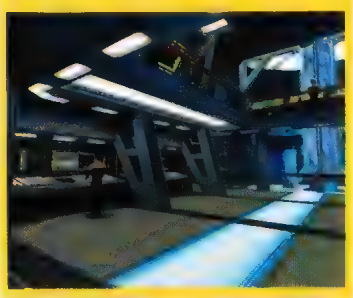
As we all demand in our games, the AI of the digital actors should be impressive. Raven promise that all combatants will attempt to seek cover or retreat if things get a little bit sticky. Except, presumably, The Borg, who'll just waddle stupidly towards you as always. With the rest of the Voyager's crew acting according to type (Security moving to support you, Janeway doing her hair), this could offer us all the glitz and glamour of that distinctive skin-tight uniform. In a game. With shooting. Natch. PCG

"AI SHOULD BE IMPRESSIVE... ENEMIES WILL SEEK COVER OR RETREAT IF THINGS GET STICKY."



VOYAGING

Raven are aiming to mould the most convincing recreation of a starfleet starship yet seen. The whole of the game's Voyager scenes are based exactly on the sets from the show, right down to the last vent and door that goes 'Swooosh'. Equally, every recurring member of the cast has been converted into a realistic gaming equivalent. And the whole sound-track is made up of all those distinctive bleeps and bloops.



Take this, for example. Even people who are only mildly familiar with the series will recognise this as the engine room. Where the engines are.

COMING SOON!

Release is some way off, but we'll have updates when playable code is passed to us.

DEVELOPER FILE

Name: Raven Software

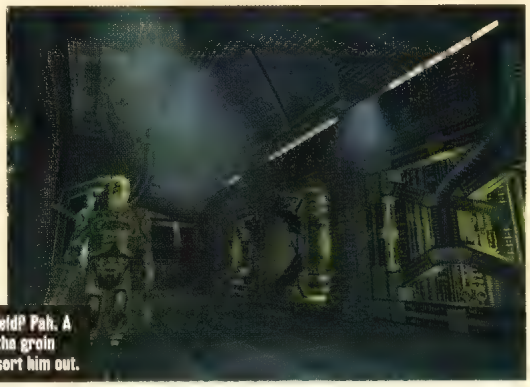
Country of Origin: USA

Established: 1988

Team Size: 43

Background: Have been writing extremely good, but not truly great, games since *Black Crypt*. Known for use of Id's graphics engines.

Previous Games: The *Heretics* and *Hexens*, and *Soldier Of Fortune* is now raising eyebrows.



Force field? Pah. A kick in the groin should sort him out.

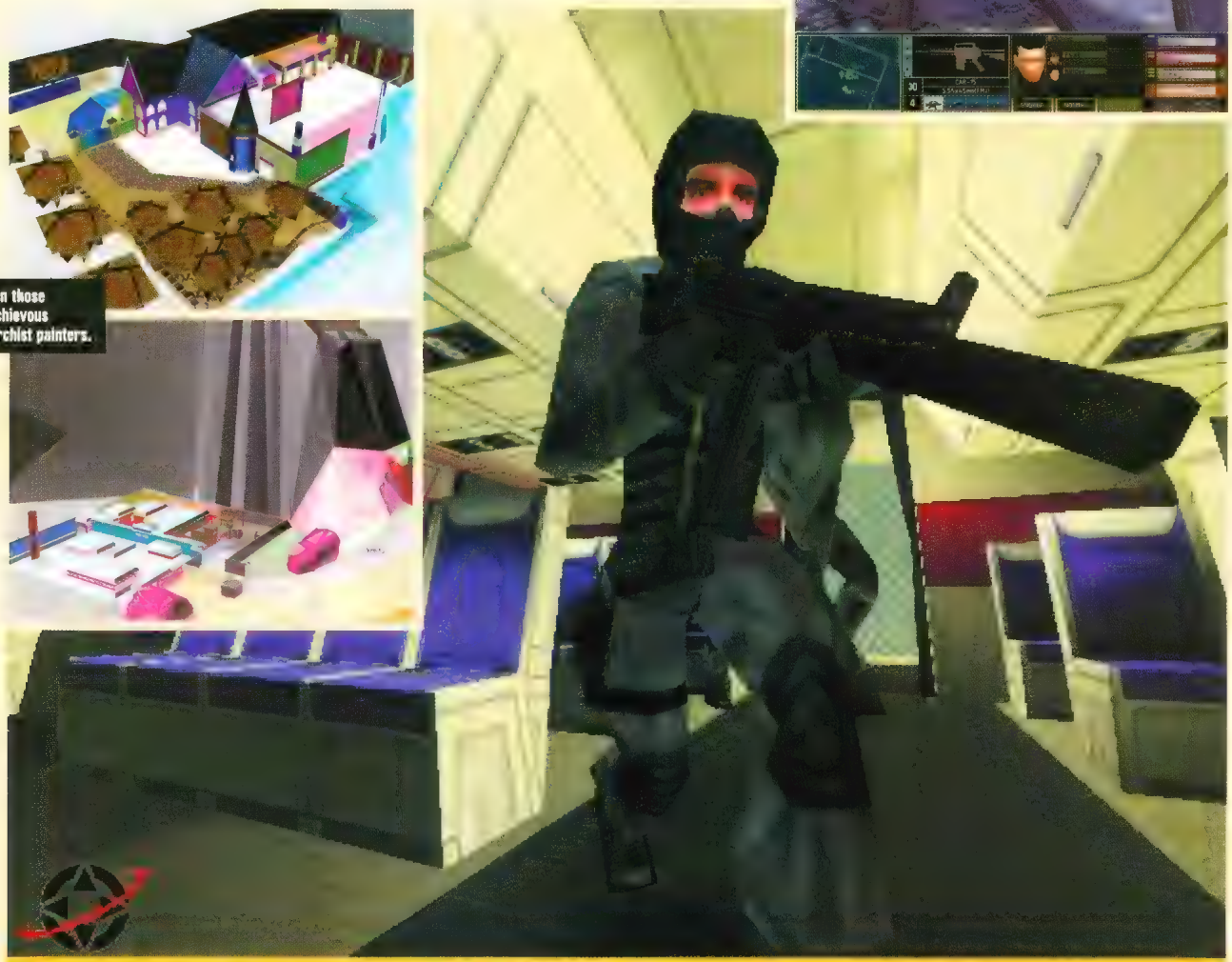
Your first look at...

RAINBOW SIX: ROGUE SPEAR

Once more unto the breach, dear friends.

By KIERON GILLEN

Damn those mischievous anarchist painters.

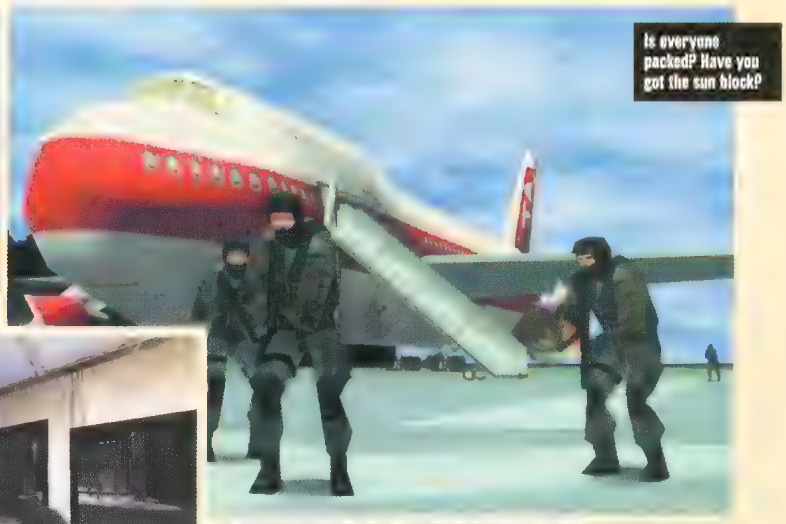


WHY *ROGUE SPEAR* WILL GO RIGHT THROUGH YOUR HEART...

- Strategic semi-soldier sims make our hearts skip a beat.
- It explores the tactics of urban assaults more deeply than any other.
- It's another member of the exclusive sniper-rifle club.
- Doors? I think we can handle them now.

DEVELOPER	RED STORM	HOW COMPLETE	90%
UK PUBLISHER	TAKE 2	RELEASE DATE	SEPTEMBER

Expect to see similar mission endings regularly.



Is everyone packed? Have you got the sun block?

KILLING TERRORISTS IS GOOD. **Unless they're freedom fighters, but that's a philosophical argument we're hardly going to tackle here. So, let's forget about the moral shoot-to-kill dimension and return to the world of *Rainbow Six*, where terminating evil militant activists is definitely a Good Thing.**

Of course, it's rather justifiable. After all: *Rogue Spear* is the US military code for a missing nuke, so it's a fairly sizeable hint to the ultimate plot. Someone's going to get radioactive.

(WHAAAAAAAAAAT? Quickly! I've got to get to a phone. Phone my family and friends to say goodbye. – A reader)

Only in the game, my friend (or is the code Broken Arrow? I forget). Before you can save the world from nuclear devastation you have to calculate how to storm 18 new levels, set in 16 glamorous locations. These should include architectural masterpieces to rival that of new genre-champion *Hidden And Dangerous* (see the review on page 74), such as the Prague Opera House, the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art and, correcting an obvious 'Missing mission' from the first game, a hijacked 747.

These more specific locations should hopefully lead to a game world that absorbs the player more effectively. Known environments always add a certain aura of credibility to a digital piece of entertainment, after all. Added to a continuation of the first game's Javan trench-deep mission planning sections, we expect something that's scarily authentic.

One curious omission from the first game was the sniper scope. Where would urban-sieges be without rows of black-visored sharpshooters on the opposite building's roof, each awaiting the order to drill a particularly obnoxious target? Nowhere, that's where. The problem's been solved in *Rogue Spear*. We shake Red Storm's hand manfully and offer to join it in an evening of light refreshments.

(Left) Early work on the level design. Fiendish.

"BEFORE YOU CAN SAVE THE WORLD YOU HAVE TO CALCULATE HOW TO STORM 18 NEW LEVELS."

But the one thing that suggests *Rogue Spear* will fulfil the promise of its predecessor is the much-vaunted improvements in AI, making both your forces and the besieged defenders act with more convincing autonomy. Right now, *Hidden And Dangerous* looks almost unassailable by its rivals, but *Rogue Spear* is patiently biding its time and gathering its strength for a stun-grenade-throwing assault. Keep watching. PCG

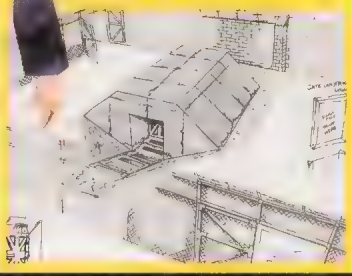
The wireframing is a work-in-progress, natch.

COMING SOON!

They're signing up for beta testers now. When we get hold of playable code, we'll be sure to tell you.

THE PERFECT PLAN 99

***Rogue Spear's* greatest asset is its use of the most plan-based play of any of the military sims. While in this version you will be able to improvise more mid-mission by sending out quick orders, the focus is still on creating a defined and perfect scheme prior to the attack. You do this by dividing your eight men into squads and laying attack routes on a three-dimensional map.**



When here, you'll want your troops to throw flash-grenades before entering each room. You'll also want to swap your snipers for assault troops, as there are no external windows. See! Tactical options! Result.

DEVELOPER FILE

Name: Red Storm Entertainment

Country of Origin: USA

Established: 1996

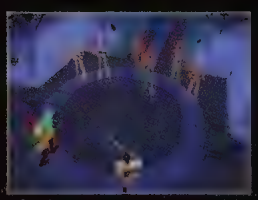
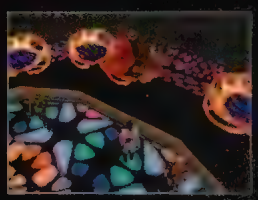
Background: Gained notice by having Tom Clancy as a founder. Have since produced lots of games with the pre-title 'Tom Clancy's', before gaining a modicum of critical acclaim with *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six*

Previous Games: The best was *Rogue Spear's* predecessor, but titles like *Politika* and *Ruthless.com* have also been released.

Wipe them out.

All of them.

STAR WARS
EPISODE I
THE PHANTOM MENACE

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PC CD ROM

PlayStation

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JOIN TATOOINE'S RUSH HOUR TRAFFIC AT 600 MPH.

PC CD ROM

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EYEWITNESS

THE PC GAMING UNIVERSE IN 15 PACKED PAGES...

SPECIAL REPORT

E3

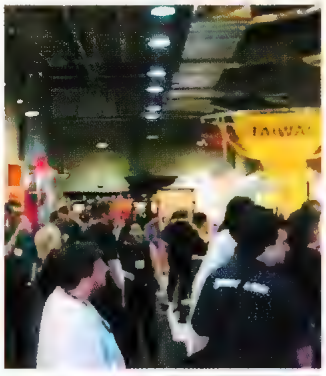
The world's biggest game show opens its doors.

On the 11th of May half of PC GAMER flew out to the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) show in Los Angeles. The reason we did will (we hope) become clear as you work your way through this issue. The three-day trade show is easily the biggest event in the games industry's calendar, and for companies big and small it's imperative that they have a presence there. For journalists it's a chance to check out the games that will be making the headlines for the next two years, and for the exhibitors it's an opportunity to try to grab some good PR as well as check out the competition.

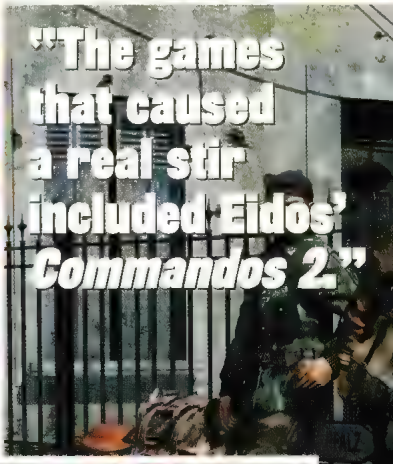
Surprisingly, this year's show featured fewer surprises than most. Big name companies such as EA, Eidos, Activision and Sierra dominated the show floor – each trying to out-do the other with louder, brasher, and bigger stands. For games that really had the press excited, check out The Spy's report on page 26. Those that caused a real stir on the floor itself included Valve's *Team Fortress 2*, Eidos' *Commandos 2*, Id's *Quake III Arena* and, of course, *C&C: Tiberian Sun*.

Overall, though, the show was characterised by a vast number of titles that were scheduled to be released long ago. *Indiana Jones, Age Of Empires II, Dungeon Keeper II, Giants* and *Homeworld* all looked fantastic, while Romero's *Daikatana* was responsible for a lot of morbid curiosity.

Meanwhile, notable absentees included 3D Realms, who decided against showing either *Prey* or *Duke Nukem Forever*, and *Grand Prix 3*, which has still to be seen by anyone other than Geoff Crammond. Roll on next year...



In this milling crowd was the future of videogames. We dragged it out kicking and screaming and brought it back to the UK.



DARK FORCES III

LucasArts reveal Episode I – Obi Wan.

Or should that be *Jedi Knight II*? Spurious semantics aside, LucasArts have made the shock announcement that work on the third in the *Dark Forces* trilogy has been under way for a while now. And to prove it, they showed us video footage of what's tentatively being referred to as *Star Wars: Episode I – Obi Wan*.

Rumours that the company had licensed Epic's *Unreal* engine for the first-person shooter have been dismissed, as Obi-Wan features what's described as a 'brand new' engine. According to the demo, players will adopt the persona of Ewan McGregor during the events of The Phantom Menace. We're expecting plenty of sabre-swinging action, as well as LucasArts' trademark genius level design.

PLANET OF THE APES

The world's first Charlton-Heston-'em-up. Believe it.
PAGE 22

TOMB RAIDER 4

We've got the first news about the latest Lara game.
PAGE 28

FIFA 2000

First shots of the successor to the reigning Footy king.
PAGE 30

SPECIAL REPORT

SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION III

At last...

Yep, there's no need to pinch yourself. You read that right. Hasbro (having already snapped up MicroProse) have managed to lure Sid Meier back to the fold in order to create *Civilization III*. In a press conference punctuated by hors d'oeuvre-scoffing American suits whooping and telling each other how much they loved each other, Sid, Jeff Briggs (President and CEO of Firaxis) and Vice President Brian Reynolds related how they'd always hoped to be reunited for *Civ III*. And (sob!), now they *were!* Funnily enough, they were less vocal when asked about the projected release date, and what they thought of Activision's recent semi-sequel to *Civ II – Civ: Call To Power*. Perhaps they were too emotional to speak...

Just reading it makes us shiver all over. How about you, eh?

■ **Firaxis will begin development of *Civ III* in the next few months.**

DRIVING

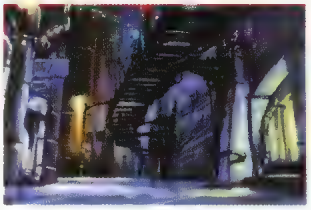
Nice Bear... Aggghhhh (Captioner is dragged off by GAMER secret police).

GRAND THEFT AUTO 2

Where the streets have no shame.

As if the Daily Mail hasn't got enough to be upset about, what with the uncensored *Kingpin* demo doing the Internet rounds, DMA have revealed their sequel to the notoriously BBFC-unfriendly *Grand Theft Auto*.

Following the overnight success of the first game, the developers have decided against branching out into novelty technology territory – so don't expect *GTA 2* to be in full 3D, or, in fact, to look much different at all from the original game. No, the improvements are in the subtleties and nuances of the gameplay. Set in one vast city (as opposed to four smaller ones), *GTA 2* relies far more on a context-sensitive behavioural system *(What? – James)*; meaning that pedestrians will react differently to you, based on your previous actions towards them or their mates. Killing a Redneck while downtown will therefore make you the target of revenge attacks if you venture out to the trailer parks, and don't ask for cop assistance, as the rozzers are far more twitchy this time round, pursuing you with cars, vans, bikes, and even unmarked FBI cars. It's looking fabulous, and we'll be first with the exclusive screenshots next month.



■ ***GTA 2* is scheduled for an October release via Rockstar.**

GOBBETS

ATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

'Massively Multi-player.' As much as we'd like to stone whoever thought of the phrase, the games to which it applies do seem jolly good, on the whole. World Fusion are working on one, a 3D

RPG title named *Atriach* set on an entirely alien world. No elves and pixies here. Even innovative features like breeding new species appear and leading armies are included. No word on a release date yet, though.

WHEREVER YOU MAY THRONE

Acclaim have announced that they'll be publishing an RPG with an Eastern flavour early next year. It's entitled *Throne of Darkness*, with you controlling seven samurai attempting you raise you up to the position of Dark Warlord. Upon reaching this stage the multi-player world is unlocked. A rather interesting angle, eh?

BUZZ GAME

Acclaim's forthcoming *Armorines* has been renamed as the notably longer *Armorines: Project S.W.A.R.M.* It uses the capable, if a little fog-heavy, *Turok 2* engine, previously seen in, um, *Turok 2* and *South Park*. We wish them all the best of luck.

STRATEGY

STAR TREK ARMADA

Another Trek game threatens to assimilate us.

Space. The final frontier. But we've used that intro already this issue, and its reappearance here is just an indication of what jet-lag can do to a man. Sorry.

Another of the three Trek titles announced by Activision at E3, this centres on what are some of the most dramatic moments in the programme – fleet battles. You can control up to 30 ships and their supporting space-stations and repair facilities, and send them into desperate conflict. It is, like the forthcoming *Homeworld* and *Conquest: Frontier Wars*, an RTS 3D space strategy affair. Tactical complexities are offered by asteroids, wormholes and nebulae-filled areas of space. For an endless vacuum, this one seems pretty packed.

Plus, you're not just limited to playing the grey ships of the Federation. The Romulans, Klingons and even top-intergalactic species-absorbers, the Borg, are available for control. With full multi-player options and 26 campaign-linked missions, it's got us so excited we've all wrapped ourselves in tin foil.

■ **Activision will be shipping their *Armada* early next year.**

Can you command ships as well as the smooth-pated captain from TNG?

ACTION/ADVENTURE

PLANET OF THE APES

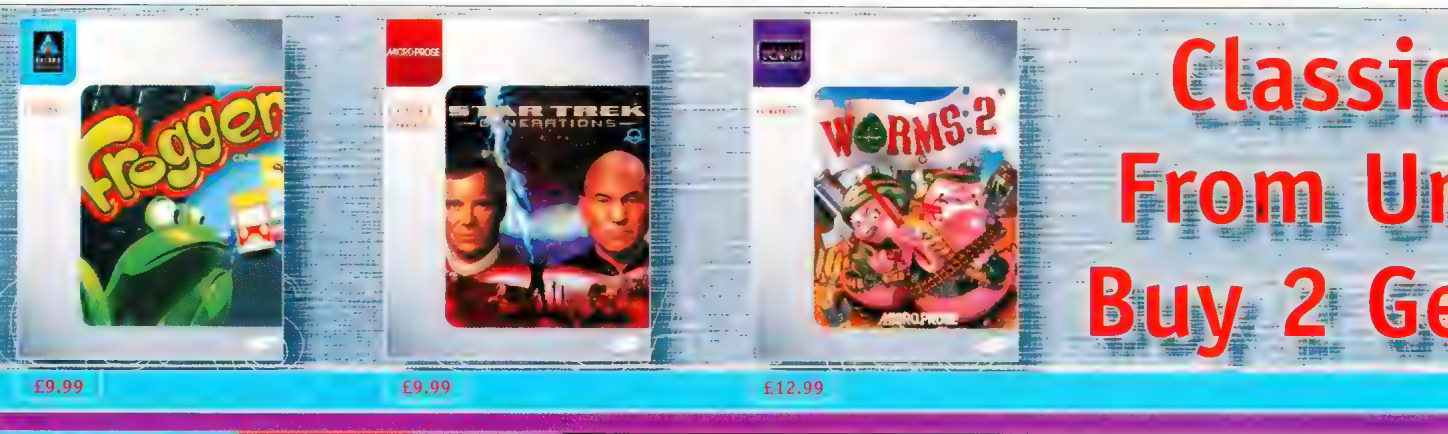
They finally went and did it.

I'll refrain from the obvious 'Matt is hairy' joke.

We know how Charlton Heston feels. In the Office Of The Apes we fight a constant battle to keep our humanity in a room whose natural order has been upturned. We thought we could find relief in PC games. Until now.

Our simian nightmare continues, as, 31 years after the release of the seminal film, Fox are releasing a third-person action/adventure tie-in game. Playing as a homo sapien across 15 huge levels, you must prove man's superiority by solving puzzles, killing giant rats and falling to your knees in front of a half-destroyed Statue Of Liberty. Probably. Although it's in the early stages of development, the motion-captured characters are already looking superb, while the inevitable '60s sound effects and stylised environments shouldn't do it any harm at all.

■ **Fox will be returning to the *Planet Of The Apes* next spring.**



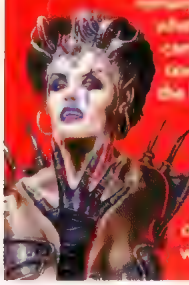
NOX

Opportunity knocks for Westwood.

The *Tiberian Sun*-delayers' new RPG/arcade game has come as something of a pleasant surprise. Resembling Diablo's good-looking cousin, *Nox* offers frenetic fantasy action from a top-down/isometric perspective, with a strong emphasis on easily accessible combat and magic.

Over 150 spells are in place, any five of which can be affixed to devious traps. Spells also have pre-set key combos for the nifty of fingers so *Nox* will almost have an arcade beat-'em-up feel to it. A sturdy plot is promised to bolster all this action, and longevity is provided in the form of a vast variety of weapons, a random quest generator and randomising maps, as seen in Diablo.

The game's emphasis, though, rests heavily on multi-player action (including co-op and CTF) and it remains to be seen whether Westwood can make it compulsive stuff for the long spell slingers.



■ *Nox* will appear in Dreams courtesy of the wizards at EA.

DRIVING

NEED FOR SPEED: HIGH STAKES

Medium rare, please.

■ I feel the need... the need for beer. But that's only because we're all working late. In normal situations I would, almost certainly, feel the need... for speed. The EA series had been wombling along for years, yet it was only the last instalment, *Hot Pursuit* (PCG 63, 83%), that really started to hit the accelerator on the PC.

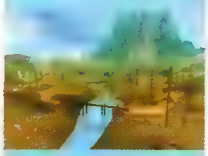
High Stakes continues the theme of the previous game (i.e. high speed chases with persistent cops). Speed shouldn't be a problem, with the 19 cars licensed from major manufacturers, while the same number of tracks certainly offers a decent amount of virgin tarmac to burn. Its damage simulation is knee-breakingly complete, with hits to specific areas leading to determined malfunctions (e.g. the headlights stop working after a head-on nudge). All that remains to be seen is whether it can keep pace with the glorious melee of *Midtown Madness*...

■ **Electronic Arts are revving up for an August release.**

GOBBETS

LITH IS THE BIG BEAT

There's been much jaw-dropping at the new pictures of Monolith's LithTech 2 engine. It seems able to manage both outdoor panoramas and the intimate murky spaces of dungeons.



While there's some debate whether its curved surfaces are *real* curved surfaces, it certainly looks the part. Expect *a lot* of licences.

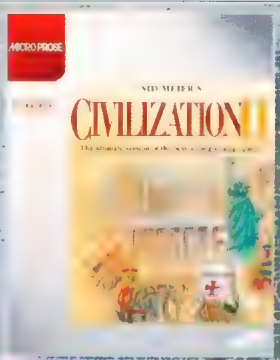
MORE BREASTS

Tsch. Nell McAndrews has given up Lara Croft's PVC top and passed it to a new owner. Who's called Lara. Lara Weller. She's best known for great early work with The Jam. No, she's really a model. Expect a semi-naked photoshoot in FHM any day now.

TWO TRIBES

The immense Internet-popularity of *Tribes* has led to the announcement of a sequel. It will add many more graphical fripperies, such as a whole new terrain engine, and the addition of a fifth tribe, called BioDerms, who have been genetically modified for war. Eeek.

Games
der £10.
1 Free!*



£12.99 £12.99 £12.99

HASBRO Interactive

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HMV
thechallenge continues...

STAR WARS: EPISODE I THE PHANTOM MENACE

topdogforgames
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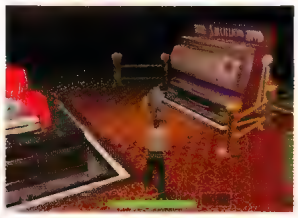
ACTION

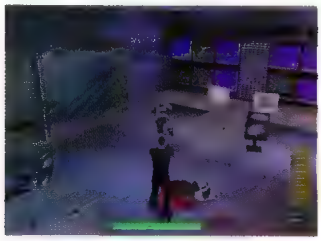
DIE HARD TRILOGY 2

We've got a vested interest in this one.



Although looking a bit past-it now, the original *Trilogy* was generally loved for its unique 'three separate games spliced together' design. This sequel follows the same structure, offering you entirely unconnected first-person shooting, nippy driving and (erm) some more shooting. But from a third-person perspective this time.

So you're back in the balding head and string-vested form of John McLean in his loose-cannon mission to create complete mayhem and simultaneously stop terrorists being mean. You have to choose between the story-driven movie mode, whose adventure elements create a hybrid of the three game styles, and a straight-ahead action mode, where you can select between the three previously mentioned game styles. From what we've seen of it recently, it's looking... shall we say... 'early'. But at least time's on its side.

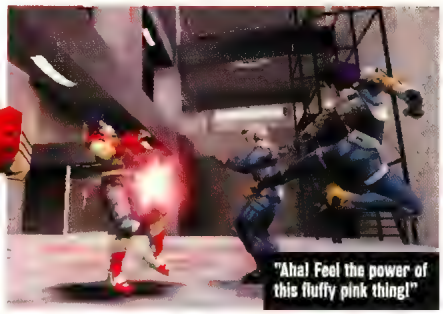


■ Fox Interactive will be yippie-ki-yaying in time for Christmas.

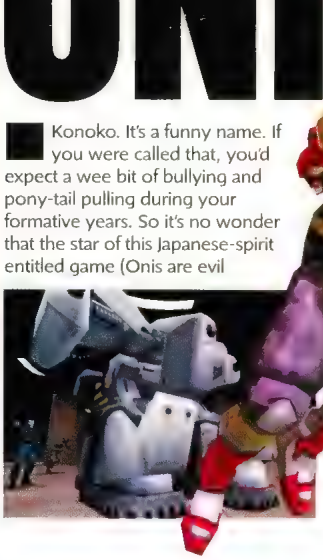
ACTION

ONI

"Does it hurt?" "Oni when I laugh." "Shut it."



Konoko. It's a funny name. If you were called that, you'd expect a wee bit of bullying and pony-tail pulling during your formative years. So it's no wonder that the star of this Japanese-spirit entitled game (Onis are evil ghosts, Eastern-myth fans) turned out to be such a CRAZY KUNG-FU PSYCHO NINJA LASS. Yes.



Oni is an interesting mix of genres, adding a much more pronounced *Virtua Fighter*-style fighting element to a third-person *Tomb Raider*-esque beast. As well as firearms, you can unleash a combo of sufficient martial mayhem to make Bruce Lee jealous. You can even disarm the opposition and use their weapons to finish them off, though developers Bungie promise that it won't turn into a *Tekken* clone. We're looking forward to it.

■ GT will lash out before Christmas.

ACTION/ADVENTURE

OMIKRON: THE NOMAD SOUL

Bowie in 'acting a bit weird' shocker.

Eidos' forthcoming action/adventure epic, *Omikron: The Nomad Soul*, has been blessed by the hand of none other than ageing rock god David Bowie. In development by French outfit Quantic Dream, *Omikron* is set in a dark cyberpunk world, into which you're thrust to save your own soul and the entire city.

'Ambitious' hardly begins to describe the project, which features motion-captured beat-'em-up combat, use of vehicles, complex dialogue trees, first- *and* third-person action, and puzzle solving. Character interaction includes the first ever use of real-time motion-captured faces in a PC game, and you'll be free to move around the four huge cities at will, and interact with some 70 key NPCs.

Reincarnation into the first NPC to touch your body allows you to continue playing when you get killed. David Bowie's contribution is significant; as well as providing much of the music, he also acts as a character in the game along with his wife, Iman, and plays with his band in several locations – you can even buy his CD. See, I told you it was weird.

■ ***Omikron: The Nomad Soul* should be given life in October by Eidos.**

It's nice to see that 1980s haircuts haven't died out completely.

ACTION

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

Deep Space? Deep (Snip! - Ed), more like.

"Set phasers to tickle!"

It seems that every member of the Star Trek franchise has been made into a PC game, with the notable exception of The Firm's top novelty-hit 'Star Trekking'. Actually there's another omission – there hasn't been a Deep Space Nine game. You may have seen where this is leading...

So, yes, there's going to be a game set on the eponymous space-station. Using the *Unreal* engine, it'll be a shooter that's playable either in first- or third-person perspectives. The military shortcomings of the game may grate, with DS9 being the most sedentary and political of the programmes, but fans are sure to be placated by its plot continuing from where the TV series ended. One Star Trek game too many? We'll see.

■ **GT will be on publishing duties in November.**

HMV

thechallenge continues...

STAR WARS: EPISODE 1 RACER

Relive all the thrill and excitement of the Podrace sequence from Star Wars: Episode 1. Hang on tight with afterburners on. Podracers max out at a simulated 600mph! Race in furious competition with 21 other opponents. Race on over 21 tracks in 8 unique worlds and avoid hazards such as meteor fields, plasma showers and Tusken Raiders. Can you survive?

MIDTOWN MADNESS

Strap on your seatbelt and prepare for some wild racing action – Midtown Madness throws you into an urban jungle in this open-ended top racing game that combines the challenge of competition with the freedom of unrestricted exploration. Beat the traffic and dodge the pedestrians and be the first through the finishing gate in this ultimate driving experience.

topdogforgames

www.hmv.co.uk

*All offers are subject to availability at participating stores. While stocks last.

GOBBETS

OFF-ROAD RAGE

The firm proponents of full-on arcade action at Rage are working on another delectable treat to stick in our

game-mouths. *Off-road GT* is a highly kinetic game, placing you in a buggy and letting you churn up some dust-covered tracks. Expect a lot of fun in October.

STEP TO THIS

We knew *Black And White* was going to break ground, but get this: Peter Molyneux is claiming that you can tell your PC to recognise what music CD is in your drive and make your character perform actions when it's playing. A little Atari Teenage Riot and he'll go mental. Play Belle and Sebastian and he'll sit around and simper. Spooks.

FROG CHORUS

Bullfrog's co-founder Les Edgar has been discussing the new on-line evolving environment game he's working on. While keeping details close to his chest, he's mentioned that a free-on-line release of the main program could be a possibility after an initial retail appearance to recoup their expenses. Profits would then be made from on-line fees.

SIX IS THE BEST?

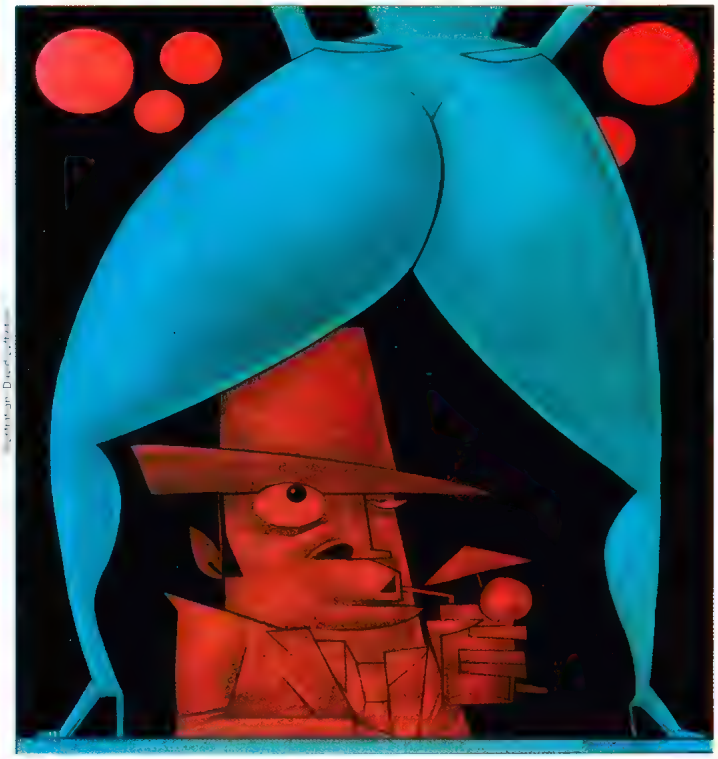
The always-average Electronic Arts *Test Drive* series is heading towards its sixth appearance this October. Its main innovation is an

"upgrade your car" feature and improved physics, graphics and thrilling shortcuts. For example, through Parisian cafés.

THE SPY

NAKED AMBITION

LA reveals a wealth of new talent.



The show floor of E3 may have been sorely lacking in new, never-before-seen games, but if you knew where to look, the secrets were there.

The Spy thought that *Commandos 2*, Pyro's inevitable sequel to their sleeper hit of last year, was looking stunning – still static backgrounds, but featuring unbelievably realistic motion-captured characters, far more freedom of movement and a wealth of new vehicles. Meanwhile, *Freelancer* – Chris Roberts' *Wing Commander*-esque space shooter – was jaw-droppingly impressive, and included ships the size of which put Star Wars' Star Destroyers to shame. Rumour has it that DID are to be sold to Infogrames, although it isn't known if the three amazing games shown in secret – a go-anywhere racer, *Road Rage*, a futuristic flight sim, *Air Rage* and a semi-sequel to *EF2000*, *Typhoon* – will end up under the French banner.

Eidos remain busy, signing up another four titles tied-in to Looking Glass' *Thief: The Dark Project*. *Thief Gold* (which includes new missions) and a sequel, *Thief II: The Metal Age*, as well as two others, are in the pipeline. Plus, they've persuaded Timeline Studios (the Michael Crichton-inspired developers) to sign on the dotted line.

On the flip side, Interactive Magic have decided to pull out of the PC games business, Sierra's highly anticipated *Team Fortress 2* and *Babylon 5* have both slipped until at least the spring of next year, while the *Unreal*-powered *Navy SEALs* has been canned.

Spy out.

RACING

RALLY MASTERS

Gremlin's racer wows the crowds.

We brought you the exclusive first look at this gorgeous new racer a while ago, but this month it drew large crowds at the E3 trade show in LA. From what was on show, the creators of *Motorhead*, Swedish developers Digital Illusions, have surpassed themselves by creating a game that seems to have the edge on *Colin McRae Rally*.

Featuring a more eclectic range of environments and tracks than previous rally titles, *Rallymasters* boasts an incredible 368 courses including reverse, weather and day/night variants. There are over 60 different cars and 70 opponents to choose from, as well as an all-too-rare four-player simultaneous mode of play.

■ Gremlin will be gearing up for a September release.

DRAGON'S LAIR 3D

We fear too.

The *Dragon's Lair* arcade game still holds distinct memories. The utter rush of glee when something resembling a cartoon inspired delusions of gaming Valhalla. And then the free-fall terror as you realised that there was literally no game involved at all. Ah. Those were the days.

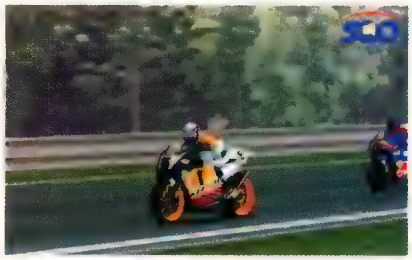
And now they're back. Legendary big-screen cartoonist Don Bluth (he of Thumbelina fame) has teamed up with Blue Byte to design and create *Dragon's Lair 3D*, and they promise all the family-oriented non-explicit fun of its predecessors. It's in concept stage at the moment (hence the lack of screenshots), but one thing Mr Bluth has commented upon is that one of the new baddies will be "Steal Monkeys". Who are monkeys. Made of steel. Who steal things. Ouch.

■ Blue Byte. Christmas 1999. You know the score.

RACING

GP 500

Hasbro corner the market.



Precise physics will mean a seriously demanding ride.

Bike sims very rarely get the kind of reception heaped on their four-wheeled brethren, yet *GP 500* looks like breaking that tradition. It offers the kind of racing experience that should have the *F1* camp drooling: exact replicas of 14 real-life courses, physics so realistic that you have to fight the steering, and visuals that exceed the lofty heights set by both *Castrol Honda Superbike* and EA's *Superbike World Championship*.

Bike sims are traditionally pretty thin on the ground, but the addition of a more forgiving arcade mode should see *GP 500* drag itself out of the 'obsessives only' niche. There's nothing worse than a quality game getting ignored due to its subject matter – and *GP 500* screams quality even at this early stage.

■ ***GP 500* is set for a summer release on the Hasbro label.**

ADVENTURE

ALONE IN THE DARK 4

It's a situation Kieron finds himself in every night.

Coming as a complete surprise to most, Infogrames chose to reveal the next game in the *Alone In The Dark* series at the E3 show. Although only a rolling video, the presentation gave a good indication of what developers Darkworks have in mind for the title.

AITD 4 looks like relying on flick-screen locations to provide the setting for the familiar arcade/adventure elements that *Resident Evil* managed to combine so successfully. The demo also featured outrageously stylish backgrounds, fluid character animation, and, naturally, lots of sinister thunder and lightning. We can't wait to see more.

Woo-eel Scary stuff.

■ **Infogrames will publish *Alone In The Dark 4* early next year.**

GOBBETS

DO YOU BELIEVE IN HOGS?

Looking like a cross between *Cannon Fodder*, *Lemmings* and lost classic *Psycho Pigs UXB*, *Hogs of War* promises to be, er, a game from Gremlin.

Skirmish action ahoy, my friends. If it's any good, it might be equivalent to a real-time *Worms*.

A GOOD LIE

***Ultimate Golf* is on its way from Ubi Soft, but we won't see it until early in 2000. Developers Vertex Multimedia aim to let you wander about freely, positioning yourself for the shot or checking out the bumps on the green. Or heading behind a tree for a crafty fag.**

MORE ROLLS

Psygnosis are currently developing a new version of madcap racer *Rollcage*, entitled *Rollcage Extreme*, for

release early next year. It'll expand the game, by adding new levels, leagues, weapons, scenery and (hopefully) some more enthralling gameplay.

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MARK REIN, VP EPIC MEGAGAMES

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GOBBETS

NOAH'S ARCATERA

Ubi Soft are promising a "cross between Blade Runner and *Baldur's Gate*" in *Arcatera: The Dark Brotherhood*. It mixes impressive third-person graphics with

fully non-linear NPCs and a sophisticated magic system. HELP! I'VE TURNED INTO A PRESS RELEASE! But seriously, it looks jolly good. Expect it early in the next millennium.

FINAL FANTASY VIII...

Is coming to the PC. Nothing more really need be said, eh?

DEEP DEEP

Deep Deep. Deep-Deep-Deep-Deep-deepdeep. That was the tune of Boop, novelty hit in 1994. It's nothing to do with the forthcoming Ubi Soft deep sea action game *Deep Fighter*. You have

to hunt down foes of your underwater colony while directing drones to repair and renovate your house. After all... you've got a dreadful case of damp.

TENCHU (BLESS YOU)

What was the first sneak-'em-up released? *Thief: The Dark Project? Metal Gear Solid?* Nope... it was *Tenchu: Stealth Assassin*. (What about *Saboteur?* – Extremely old reader) Shush you! Anyway... Activision now have the rights to develop a PC version of *Tenchu 2*. Hurrah!

TOMB RAIDER 4

Core make it four.

Core Design invited only an elite group of international bankers to see the latest episode in the Croft saga. However, our specially trained, conversational, high-memory InfoFly was able to dodge around the laser-defence grid to sit on a wall and bring us these facts about Lara's next adventure. Bzzzzzz.

According to InfoFly, Miss Croft is now more detailed due to her new 'skinned' nature, but perverts will be disappointed to hear that she's less breast-enhanced than previous editions. The levels our insectoid chum witnessed possessed the wide open spaces reminiscent of the first game, with less enemies and more puzzles, but the graphical style was described as a more polished version of *Tomb Raider 2*.

■ Eidos will be squeezing Lara into her PVC for Christmas.

STRATEGY

THE SIMS

Get a life. A computer one.

Are you a gambling man, sir? Well an outside possibility for sleeper hit this yule-tide season would be *The Sims*. First, it's the new game from *SimCity* creator Will Wright. Second, the whole concept's just so intriguing it's possible that it might capture hearts worldwide.

Basically it's a person-based strategy game, creating a curious playpen for you to experiment with the tactics of day-to-day living. Confused? Us too. It'll allow you to create any person with whatever interests you choose, then let you guide them through their life. Experiment with love, various work routes, crime and the vagaries of household utilities. Wrestle with the possible social minefield of your boss coming around to your house for a meal. Perhaps the most intriguing end-product of this will be teaching truly hardcore gamers the rules of social interaction. And how to speak to 'chicks'.

I hope you haven't taken advantage of the bubbles.

Since seeing *The Sims*, Matt has used his new-found knowledge of the female mind to good effect, and now has a girlfriend who makes him pancakes in bed. Frankly, we all want a go. *(On* Sims. *– Ed)*

■ EA will release *The Sims* around Christmas.

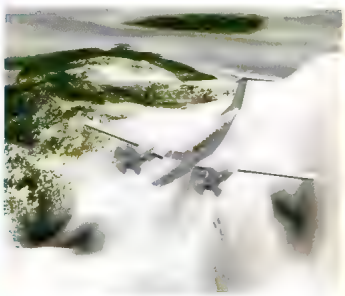
FLIGHT SIM

MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2000

So real, your computer will fly around the room.

Simulating flight. That's what Microsoft Flight Simulators are about. Simulating flight. Not dogfighting. Or locking on missiles. But flying. Flying over things. Then landing. And perhaps, if the weather's right, taking off again.

The thing is, they're extremely good at it and the 'games' are immensely popular. This latest version features enhanced graphics and adds two whole new planes for flight boys to savour: the Concorde and the Boeing 777-3000. The number of airports has been increased from a mere 3,000 in the '98 edition to a frankly grotesque 20,000. Plus, a full Global Positioning System is operational, providing true point navigation. Basically, things couldn't get any more real. Except they can. For, in parallel to the release of the standard game, there's a Professional Edition that is designed to be used as a practice tool for formal flight schooling. This includes Instrument Flight Rules training, and loads of other things we don't understand that are fully implemented to help you brush up for your final flight exam.



■ Microsoft will take *Flight Sim 2000* to the sky come Christmas.

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GOBBETS

BY THE TIME WE GET PHOENIX...

We'll be a little bit older. Team 17 are working on a gloriously gaudy space-arcade game, *Phoenix*, that was seemingly inspired by the legendary early-Eighties alien-death-athon. Our trigger fingers are itching for the conflict. Yes.

STUNT OF THE LITTER

Except it actually looks rather good. As well as *Phoenix*, Team 17 are working on an exciting looking wacky circuit-based racer called *Stunt GP*. It possesses incredibly colourful and smooth graphics, and seems to be part of the New Wave of Exciting Fun Racers that *Midtown Madness* (see review on page 84) has started.

ME LEGS! ME LEGS!

Turn-based football comes to the PC, with all the anorak-joys of a game for people too unfit to play the real thing. No... we're not convinced that it'll all come together into something playable

either (turn-based football for christsake!), but we'll wait to pass judgement. We've been proved wrong before. Just not that often. *Subbuteo* is due out from Hasbro in November, but we'll bring you more news about it before then.

SPORT

FIFA 2000

Who'd have thought it?

One of the best things about the Millennium is how all the regularly repeating games series' names sound suitably retro-Eighties cyberpunk cool. What would you rather play; weak-and-wimpy *FIFA 96?* Or post-apocalypse leather-clad shades-wearing *FIFA 2000?* Exactly.

Of course, in real terms, it's the usual steady progression rather than full-on revolution we see here. In *FIFA 2000*, all the events of a team's year will be fully integrated with each other. Like in a football management game you'll alternate between whatever cups and European leagues you're in, in addition to your main conference. While the usual current teams are here, it also follows the lead of *Viva Football* to include 40 classic teams, both national and club, for you to play 'What ifs?' with. EA also claim that the top ten teams of all-time will be revealed.

Surely that's a foul, Ref?

Putting aside random xenophobia, *FIFA 2000* promises to up the amount of physical contact between players, increasing the level of shoulder-barging, jostling and mid-air contact. We'll bring you an in-depth preview next month.

■ **EA will pass up-field in November.**

ADVENTURE

STAR TREK: INSURRECTION

This is the last one. Honest.

The 399th series of treasure hunt was under way.

Rather than taking the standard route for a film-based game – in other words, converting the whole thing – *Star Trek: Insurrection* is set nine whole months after the events of the Next Generation feature film. You play a fresh ensign from the academy, set to serve on the Enterprise, and luckily you're male, thus saving you from the usual 'welcome' from the Enterprise's legendarily friendly Second.

It's a point-and-click adventure with pretensions of action, as you have to master the use of phasers and the like. True Trekkies will be delighted to know that, for the first time, you can actually get medieval with the ol' Vulcan nerve pinch too. They'll also be pretty pleased that Patrick Stewart and Brent Spiner star in the cut-scenes as Captain Picard and Data respectively.

■ **Activision will publish early next year.**

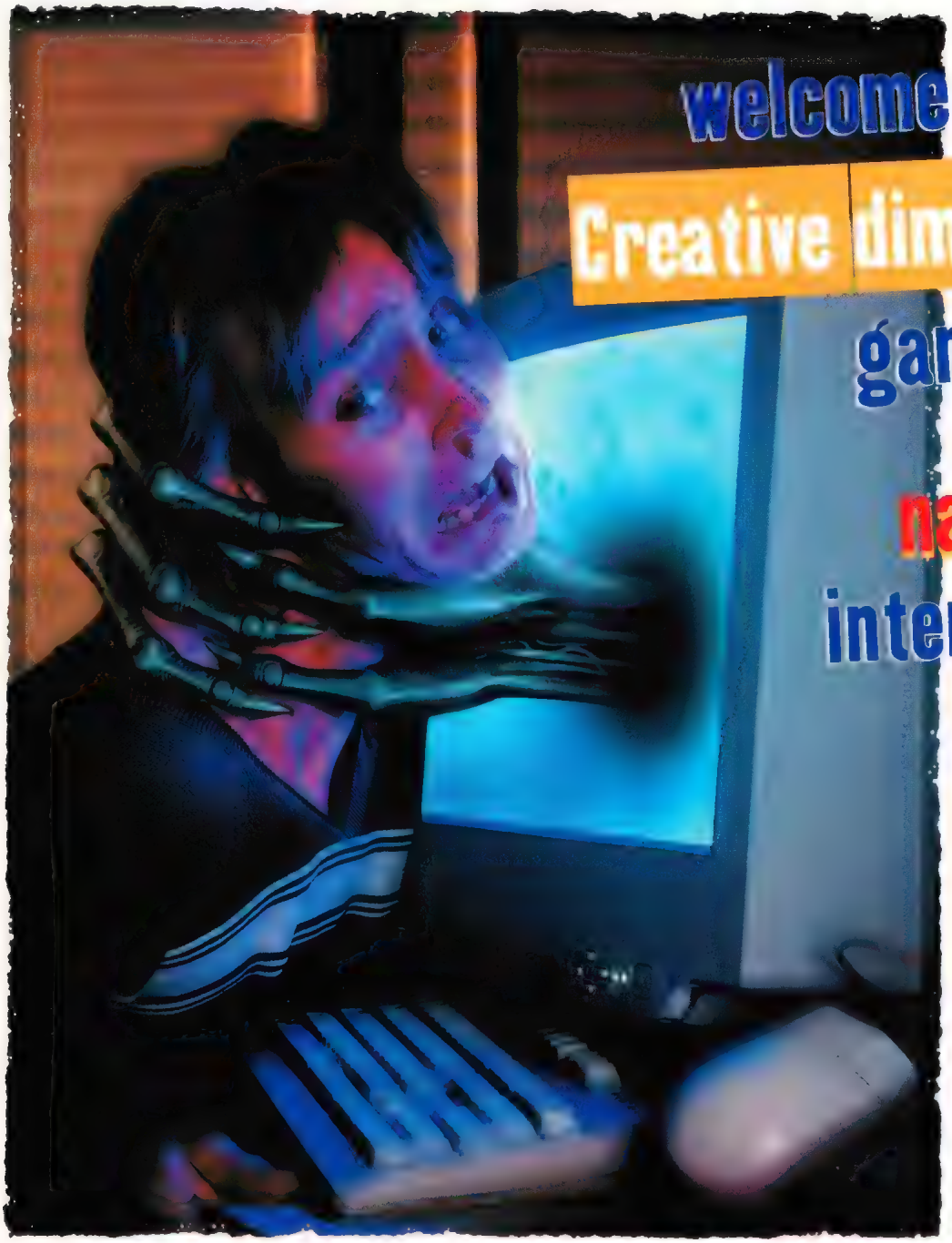
MICROSOFT CONTROLLERS

"Got a spray can?" "Yeah... let's go."

I forget who said it, but you have to raise a glass to the person who stated, "You can be poor. You can be rich. But it's nice to be rich." If we update this to the modern milieu, and on the subject we have at hand, "You can be poor. You can be rich. But it's nice to have a game controller that's silver".

Yes, Microsoft are releasing the new, improved Sidewinder Pro with a particularly stunning silver finish. The Sidewinder Gamepad Pro isn't just a looker, though, mixing analogue and digital control on one handy D-pad. The mouse is pretty cute too.

■ Both will be available soon from Microsoft.



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GOBBETS

SEVEN SONS

We've literally had to stop the printers to give you the first news of *Might And Magic 7*. It's the first of the series that's aiming to use 3D accelerators, so looks positively

sumptuous. Add a whole extra load of the usual RPG gubbins, and we have something that *Baldur's Gate* fans will long for.

DON'T STOP! THIEF!

Expect to spend a lot of time lurking in the shadows in the next few years. Eidos have reached an agreement with the gaming gods at Looking Glass Technology to make *four* more games based around the world of *Thief*. The first will be *Thief Gold*, which adds three new levels to the original game. Early next spring will come the true *Thief II: The Metal Age*.

SQUEAL LITTLE PIGGY

It had to happen. EA are currently working on (deep breath) *Ted Nugent's Master Hunter*. As in heavy-metal survival-bod Ted Nugent. And hunting games. We expect to see people chasing bears to the sound of poodle-rock.

4-WHEEL

Electronics Arts are bringing *Hot Wheels* to the PC. They claim it's a brand that has 98% recognition rate among blokes, but it seems

that we're all in the élite 2%. Anyway, this is looking like a fancy *Micro Machines* in full 3D with impressive 360-degree stunt tracks. Woooosh!

SPECIAL REPORT

ELSA ERAZOR III TNT2

Yet another graphics card! We'll just keep reviewing them until they stop arriving in the post.

Just one new card this month, but it's a goody. The TNT2 at first appears to be merely a souped-up TNT, with a similar yet faster processor. In reality, though, the entire board has been hiked up, resulting in a considerably faster card. Clearly it's a worthy competitor to the new Voodoo3 card we reviewed last month (awarded 82%). In tests it enjoys similar performance, and that's before the drivers have been finalised (which might squeeze another 5% extra).

What's more important, however, is the TNT2's forward-looking design. The Voodoo3 is still based on three-year-old Voodoo technology, and the grey hairs and crow's feet are showing. The Voodoo3 supports a maximum of 16-bit colour in 3D (65,536 colours), while the TNT2 runs all the way up to 32-bit (some 65,000 times more, and more than the eye can distinguish). 3Dfx, makers of Voodoo, claim that colour depth is less important until you can get games running at over 50 frames per second, but this is what the Erazor is capable of. There's only a 10% or so loss of frame rate when switching from 16-bit to 32-bit colour.

Another blow to aged technology is that the Voodoo3 can only handle

Quake III's portal technology looks great with a TNT2-based graphics card. Yummy.

textures of 256 x 256 pixels in size. The TNT2 (and other next-generation cards) goes up to 2048 x 2048. Wait until you see *Quake III Arena* in 32-bit colour with larger textures, and you'll not only appreciate the improved quality of your image, but also that the TNT2 comes with 32Mb RAM. The Voodoo3 is limited to 16Mb. Home video enthusiasts will appreciate the optional video in/out and software MPEG decoding on the more expensive model.

Verdict: Extremely fast and with some excellent add-ons, although compatibility might be a problem for another few months. 84%

SPECCY FOUR EYES

MANUFACTURER QUOTED SPECIFICATIONS
Elsa Erazor III ■ £165 (with Video I/O) ■ £135 without

Type	2D/3D
Memory	32 Mb SDRAM
Core clock speed	150 MHz
Memory speed	183 MHz
RAMDAC	300 MHz
Max resolution	1920x1200
Driver support	DirectX, OpenGL
Slot support	AGP 2X, 4X
3D colour depth	32-bit (over 4 billion)
DVD playback	30 fps
Extras	TV out, video in, video editing (optional)
Games	*Need For Speed III, Recoil*

PC GAMER TESTS (relative)

	Elsa TNT2	Voodoo3 3000 (reviewed PCG 70)
2D benchmark	210	180
3D Mark 99	2583	2574
***Quake II* fps**	62.2	70.3

Compare these results to Voodoo2 (no 2D support, 3D Mark: 2296, Q2: 57.1), ATi's All-in-Wonder Pro (2D: 113, 3D: 841, Q2: No support). The software engine speed for *Quake II* on our test system was 17.7 fps. It's clear that, while they're not an astronomical improvement over the Voodoo2, they also offer excellent 2D support and will get better with new drivers.

STOP PRESS

Just as we were about to go to press, Creative's Savage 4 card showed up in the office. We haven't had time to test it properly or even photograph it, but here's what we *do* know about this exciting chipset.

It's a 2D/3D card with 32Mb SDRAM and a 300MHz RAMDAC, so on the surface it's similar to the TNT2. However, the Savage 4 chipset specialises in texture compression, where high resolution textures can be squeezed into smaller amounts of memory. This leads to better images, and faster frame rates, and will be featured in both *Quake III Arena* and *Unreal Tournament*. We ran a quick texture rendering test, and it managed to render 16Mb textures at almost 40 fps (800 x 600), while the Voodoo2 managed a feeble 2.7 fps. That should give you some idea of the chipset's power. We'll give you a full run-down next issue.

Matrox's new G400 was also due this issue, but didn't make it in time. The Canadian company are giving the impression that it will need a top-of-the-range PC to function to its full potential, which is something of a shame. Don't worry, we'll test it on a lower spec machine to see how it performs for the average punter. Finally, we sit tight for June, the month in which Videologic's new card is expected. We've seen a pre-release version and it looks very speedy.

Each time we're given a new card we'll give you our first impressions. But if you want to know how they all compare after the software drivers have settled down, we'll be bringing you a big round-up during the summer. If you can hang on a little longer for that, we urge you to do so.

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- *40 Different troops to select, each with their own personal traits*
- *Game development assisted by a WWII Commander.*
- *Force feedback support through Windows 95/98.*
- *4 Player co-operative action over LAN-co-ordinate your strikes!*

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FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

SPECIAL REPORT

Our special agent reports on the perils of PC game design in the Wild East.

By KEITH STUART

WHEN most Westerners think of Russia, they think of four things: snow, poverty, aged politicians and vodka – the last two often in combination. Videogame development? Pah, many would be surprised to discover that Russians don't have communal Sinclair Spectrums, which people queue up for days to play on. Indeed, those with a little knowledge of videogame history will recall that *Tetris*, perhaps the most addictive game ever devised, was written by a Russian scientist – Alexey Pazhitnov. However, the messy legal battle that raged over rights to the game following its creation (read about it in David Sheff's excellent book Game Over) serves as a good introduction to the way the videogame industry, and business in general, works in Russia. Haphazardly, and with an element of danger.

"Destroy him, my robots!"

Private Wars (below). There's nothing like a nice country walk. With a bazooka.

Iron Strategy. Mix robots, big guns and 3D landscapes. Stand well back.

WEAK ECONOMY, STRONG GANGSTERS

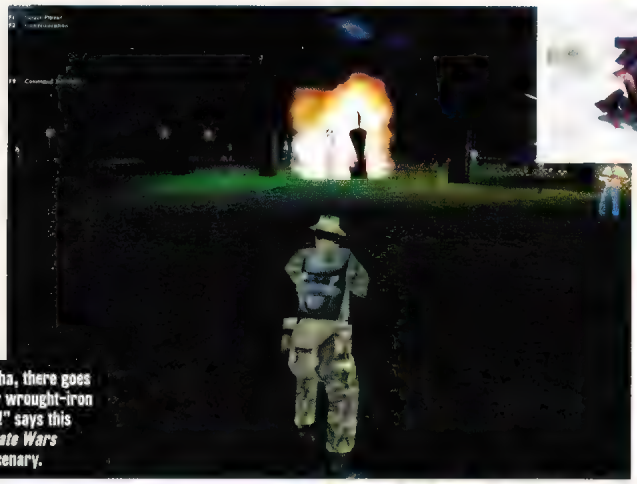
Okay, so the country has something of a bungee economy; one minute it's levelling out, doing all right, getting by, the next minute the value of the rouble drops like a lead weight, turning currency into loo paper and wiping out life savings over night. Although the developers themselves cope well with the situation, they find it hard to attract western publishers – who wants to invest in a country which can wipe out that investment in little more than a day?

And then there's the Mafia. As Nick Grey, Managing Director of Moscow-based development studio Eagle Dynamics (see *Flanker SU-25* scoop, PCG 70) points out, "Organised crime is HUGE and now institutionalised. It's controlled by tough, intelligent and stylish individuals who have true grit courage and determination. You can't help drawing parallels with early American capitalism – I'm sure the second generation of 'new Russian' businessman will clean up the act, but right now it's a dangerous and volatile way to run an economy." As PC GAMER wrote in PCG 70, Eagle have an armed

CLEVER CLOGS

Russian game development is simply loaded with top-level scientists, mathematicians and programmers who would probably be working for the government if it weren't for the fact that the Russian government has enormous debts and owes billions of roubles in back-dated pay. Eagle have taken on several ex-military scientists to work on their *Flanker* flight sims, while Maris Multimedia have their own stable of geniuses – as Chris Lawton points out: "The staff in Russia have a remarkable depth of talent. Among our employees we have 5 PhD-qualified staff and 23 MSc-qualified staff – that's an incredible roster." And, of course, the economic climate in Russia means that labour costs are low. Nikita Skripkin reckons his team can develop a "great, solid, game" for around $400-$600k – which is only a little more than Ion Storm allegedly costs Eidos per month!

Iron Strategy. The future is green.

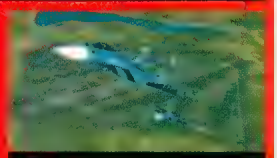


"Ha ha, there goes their wrought-iron gate!" says this *Private Wars* mercenary.

Nikita's *Barmaley*. For kiddies.

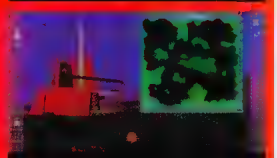
THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING: TITLES TO WATCH OUT FOR

Flanker 2.0 – developed by Eagle Dynamics. Unnervingly accurate flight sim marrying incredible visuals, realistic environments and beautifully modelled war craft with a comprehensive mission system. The arcade mode should broaden its appeal.



Flanker 2.0 – Flight sim

Iron Strategy – developed by Nikita. Futuristic warbot shoot-'em-up in the *MechWarrior* vein. Features lavish 3D visuals, AGP support, day/night and weather simulation, dynamic lighting effects and some huge guns. LAN, modem, Internet support.



Iron Strategy – Warbot shoot-'em-up

Private Wars – developed by TG Group Entertainment. Innovative 3D mission-based shoot-'em-up, in which the player controls a group of mercenaries fighting for a variety of dodgy governments. Includes sim and arcade modes, hundreds of square miles of terrain to fight on, 30 different mercenaries to select and full LAN and Internet play support.

Private Wars – 3D shoot-'em-up

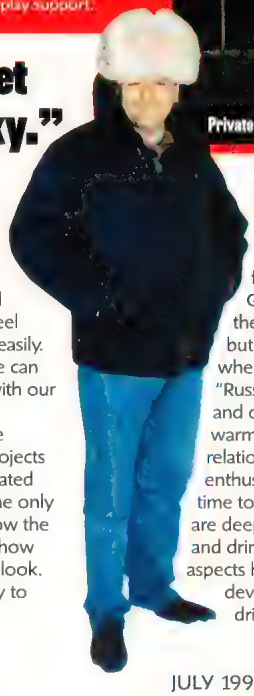
"There isn't a protection racket on every street corner in Moscow. Eagle have just been unlucky."

guard on the door of their office after several approaches by local Mafia groups. Last year there were thousands of business-related murders in Russia and, according to Grey, the country's average murderer profile is a 35-year-old, military-trained killer.

NOT ALL DOOM AND GLOOM

So if the key problems are the rollercoaster economy and the threat of organised crime, what are the bonuses? Well, most importantly, developing games in Russia is cheap and there's no shortage of talent (see 'The Russians are coming'). In any case, Western observers sometimes overstate the effect Mafia activity has on regular small businesses. Just as there isn't a Don Corleone running every business in Italy, there isn't a protection racket on every street corner in Moscow. Eagle may have just been unlucky: two other Moscow-based developers PC GAMER has spoken to – Nikita Software and Maris Multimedia – have never had any trouble at all with gangsters. And, let's face it, every country has its share of organised underworld activity.

Nikita Skripkin, the President of Nikita LTD, is indignant about his country's reputation abroad, and feels this is actually the biggest problem Russian developers face. "Some western publishers don't believe they can do good business with Russian developers," he begins. "They're afraid of Russia and prefer to deal with local developers who they feel they can control more easily. But they are wrong. We can develop great games with our experienced and well-educated teams, we are working on modern projects with the latest sophisticated development tools – the only thing we need is to know the publishers' wishes and how they want the game to look. So it's actually very easy to control the process."



Even developers who have seen the seedier side of Russia are full of admiration for the country. Nick Grey runs companies in the UK as well as Russia, but it's not hard to see where his passion lies. "Russia can be great fun and offers some of the warmest and most exciting relationships anywhere," he enthuses. "People still have time to talk and listen. They are deeply poetic and artistic and drink intensely. All these aspects help good game development." We'll drink to that.

THE OFFICIAL PC GAMER TOP 20

It's like gladiatorial fighting. But with shops instead of tridents and nets.

1 (1)	Championship Manager 3 (Eidos)	PCG 68, 91%
2 (2)	Civilization: Call To Power (Activision)	PCG 67, 92%
3 (3)	X-Wing Alliance (LucasArts)	PCG 69, 94%
4 (7)	TOCA 2 Touring Car (Codemasters)	PCG 66, 92%
5 (10)	Rollercoaster Tycoon (Hasbro Interactive)	PCG 69, 91%
6 (20)	Grand Theft Auto: London 1969 (Take 2)	PCG 69, 80%
7 NEW	Jimmy White's 2: Cueball (Virgin)	PCG 61 87%
8 (12)	Superbike World Championship (EA Sports)	PCG 68, 88%
9 (5)	Half-Life (Sierra)	PCG 63, 96%
10 (8)	SimCity 3000 (Maxis)	PCG 66, 92%
11 (6)	Commandos: Call Of Duty (Eidos)	PCG 69, 72%
12 RE	Grand Theft Auto (Take 2)	PCG 51, 92%
13 (16)	FIFA 99 (EA Sports)	PCG 64 90%
14 RE	Delta Force (Novalogic)	PCG 67, 90%
15 (13)	Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri (Electronic Arts)	PCG 67, 91%
16 RE	Baldur's Gate (Virgin)	PCG 65, 89%
17 (15)	Silver (Infogrames)	PCG 68, 90%
18 (18)	Brian Lara Cricket (Codemasters)	PCG 69, 84%
19 RE	Microsoft Flight Simulator 98 (Microsoft)	PCG 49, 78%
20 NEW	Heroes Of Might And Magic III (Ubi Soft)	PCG 70, 87%

YOUR MOST WANTED

The stars fall! Pigs fly! The end of the world is nigh! *Tiberian Sun* is no longer number one...

Yeah, you read it right. No longer are the T, I, B, E, R, A, N, S and U buttons on the special Most Wanted keyboard to be worn thin by constant pressing. At least for this month, anyway. Why? Because Id's *Quake III Arena* has thrown itself a clear 3.2% ahead of Westwood's delayed expansion of the *Command & Conquer* franchise. And *Theme Park 2*'s hot on their tails too. Interesting times.

Position	Game Wanted	Vote Share
1 (2)	Quake III Arena	22.4%
2 (1)	C&C: Tiberian Sun	19.2%
3 (NE)	Theme Park World	7.5%
4 (3)	Duke Nukem Forever	7.5%
5 (6)	Dungeon Keeper 2	4.7%
6 (9)	Grand Theft Auto 2	4.7%
7 (4)	Age Of Empires II	4.2%
8 (NE)	Commandos 2	3.7%
9 (10)	Unreal Tournament	3.3%
10 (NE)	Team Fortress 2	2.3%

Send your Most Wanted votes to:
My Most Wanted, PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.
Or fill in the coupon on page 130.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

MISSING IN ACTION

PC GAMER

RECOMMENDED

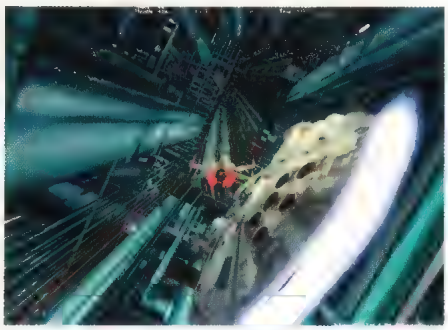
These are the games we rapidly crash out of when the boss comes into the office to see why we aren't doing any work.

Braveheart (PCG 70 90%)

Proof sufficient that all those clichés about barbarous dumb Scots are the droolings of deluded minds. To play this you'll require cerebral lobes the size of a moderately large mountain. And even then you'll have to secure the services of young nubiles to pour ice-water on your head to stop overheating.

Team Fortress Classic (PCG 70 85%)

Deadlines are becoming increasingly difficult to meet as *Team Fortress* demands constant play from most of the GAMER staff. Only beloved Prod Ed Ashley has managed to resist its charms. Frankly, it can only be time before she too is conquered. Kieron would also like you all to know that he remains King Spy.

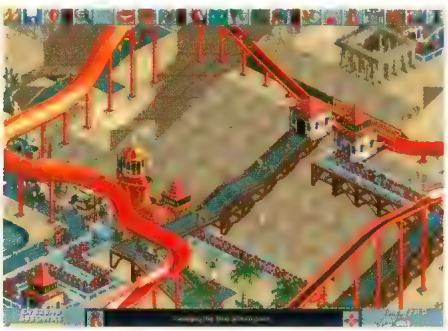


X-Wing Alliance (PCG 69 94%)

We've already mentioned the "Fly the Millennium Falcon into the Death Star" thing. Surely there's no higher recommendation we can pin to the manly chest of the *X-Wing* series' latest member? In this summer of increasing Star Wars fanaticism, this is still the most convincing PC telling of the mythos.

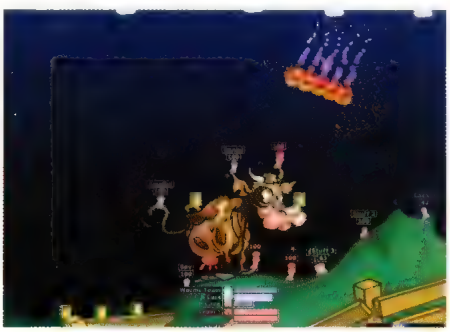
Half-Life (PCG 63 96%)

The two words that summon images of eternal carnal and emotional bliss to our tortured minds. Half. Life. Such poetry in gaming action, such heroic spirit confined in the cage of a single effervescent CD, so perfect in deed and form. A game so good that you don't feel ashamed describing it in purple prose.



Rollercoaster Tycoon (PCG 68 91%)

So enthralling that the entire staff of GAMER decided en masse to quit the frenetic life of magazine making to become a group of freelance fairground constructors. Only after three weeks without any offers of work did we skulk back to the office and the welcoming arms of *Rollercoaster Tycoon*.

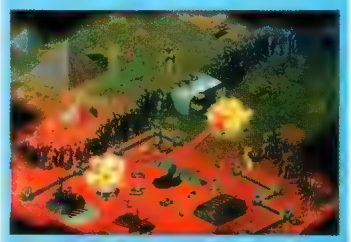


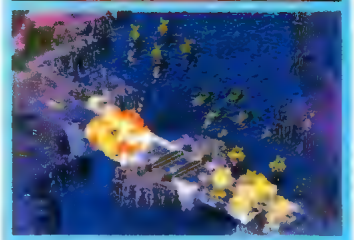
Worms Armageddon (PCG 67 90%)

It's rare that a simple turn-based head-to-head game manages to secure a place in Recommended for four months. A game that, give or take luscious cartoon graphics and extra weapons, is absolutely identical to its predecessors. Suffice to say that the helium-squeak of "Oh no!" still cries loud in the GAMER office.

SLIPPAGE CENTRAL

"My computer's crashed!" "Right... let's go to the pub".

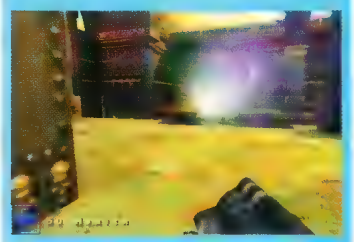




C&C: TIBERIAN SUN

(Westwood/EA)

Oh god. Don't blame us. While we understand your fury at the constant delays of the year's most awaited wargame, it's pointless sending in letters accusing us of being in cahoots with the developers. We're not writing it, so have no control over its release. Apparently they're polishing the level design. So, for this month, *Tiberian Sun* will be out in September.



QUAKE III ARENA

(Id/Activision)

Funny one this. While the PC test release has already wandered on to the Net (we aren't allowed to covermount it), the official release date has been wheeled all the way back to November. We could speculate that maybe they're wrestling with the complications of realistic computer-controlled bots, but that's all it would be. Speculation. It looks increasingly likely that *Unreal Tournament* will be the first of its type in the shops.

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THEME PARK WORLD

Theme Park 2 gets a new name and, for once, the growing hype looks justified. This is going to be huge.

By JAMES ASHTON

PREVIOUSLY ON... << We brought you first news of what was *Theme Park 2* back in issue 68.

The Lost Kingdom has a primate theme. They're missing some digits, mind.

Kids wondering where the toilets are. You did build some yes?

THEME PARK AT A GLANCE

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Developer: Bullfrog

Genre: Management

Estimated Minimum System: P133, 32Mb RAM, 3D card

Special Features: Can view any part of park or rides in real-time first-person 3D

Release Date: November

What's in it for you: Classic management game extended in all areas. More options, more depth and amazing graphics

IF there was a theme to come out of the games industry's collective willy waving event at Los Angeles' E3 show, it was one of simulation. Having reached a stage where more-or-less any developer with two development PCs and some 3Dfx manuals can create a convincing 3D engine, this year's key words were 'simulation', 'realism' and 'strategy'. And for a lot of the time it made for very worthy presentations.

Which was why on the last day of the show, *Theme Park World* came as such a breath of fresh air. Yes it's a management game. Yes it's undoubtedly got enough technical complexity and gubbins to keep even the most ardent spreadsheet hero going for months. But YES, it's also loads of fun and it simply refuses to take itself too seriously. In a world where games are developing a sinister self-importance, surely this has to be applauded.

ON LINE

Theme Park World offers some innovative options for Internet users. First, you'll be able to get updates to the game including new rides and attractions direct from Bullfrog themselves. Second, you'll be able to publish your park on-line and let other people take a look round it. The idea is to find the 20 best theme parks in the world and keep a constant league going by means of an on-line player vote. You can even send theme park postcards as e-mails - we managed to send one from E3 all the way back to Blighty.

TAKE A TRIP

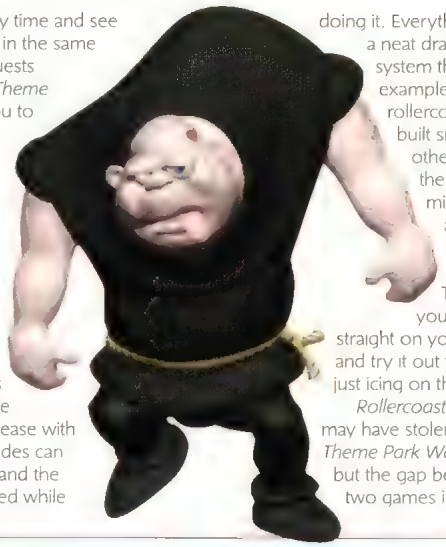
Of course the problem with seeing any management game in a show environment be it a lighthearted one or not, is that there simply isn't time to investigate the things you really want to look at. The most obvious development with *Theme Park World* is that you can now switch to a first

One too many burgers followed by one too many 'coaster rides for this kid.

"PUTS YOU ON THE GROUND, POUNDING THE PATHWAYS AND AVOIDING THE KID SICK.

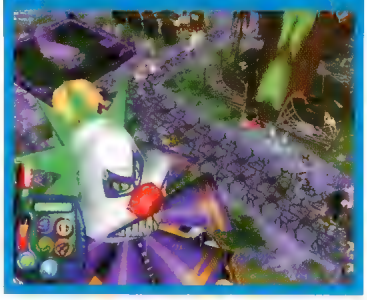
person 3D view at any time and see any part of your park in the same light as your virtual guests. Previous versions of *Theme Park* have allowed you to take a trip on any of the major attractions, such as the rollercoasters, but *Theme Park World* actually puts you down on the ground, pounding the pathways and avoiding the kid sick. It's great.

Another obvious enhancement over the original concerns the ease with which buildings and rides can now be constructed, and the flexibility you're granted while doing it. Everything works on a neat drag-and-drop system that, for example, allows rollercoasters to be built snaking over other objects in the park and minutely adjusted to give the best possible ride. The fact that you can jump straight on your 'coaster and try it out for yourself is just icing on the cake. *Rollercoaster Tycoon* may have stolen some of *Theme Park World's* thunder, but the gap between the two games in terms of presentation alone is a vast one, and we've got every expectation that Bullfrog's game will follow through with more of the beautiful complexity that marked the first title out as a classic; this was one of the games we really wanted to play all day Roll on November.



THEME SCHEME

Theme Park World **offers you the opportunity to build your theme park in one of four different styles. Halloween puts a spooky spin on things, Future needs no explanation, the 'Lost Kingdom' looks to be taking a turn for the Flintstones, and Fantasy will presumably involve goblins. And Kobolds. Whether the worlds will actually play differently (other than offering alternative rides and attractions) remains to be seen, but knowing Bullfrog's normal attention to detail, we have high hopes.**



OF THEIR OWN VOLITION

PC GAMER has a chat with Gary Penwarden of Bullfrog

In 20 words, why should we be excited about *Theme Park World*?
Simply because it's a game you'll be telling your grandchildren about.

What's the one feature you're happiest with so far?
Defiantly trying out my own rides, 'coasters in particular. I didn't think we'd be able to pull it off with any degree of realism. Happily, I was proved very wrong.

Which games have been your inspiration?
I want people to feel good while they're playing *Theme Park World*, whether that's good in an amused way or an amazed way or just a proud way. *Banjo-Kazooie* made me feel 'good' so I suppose that was one of my inspirations.

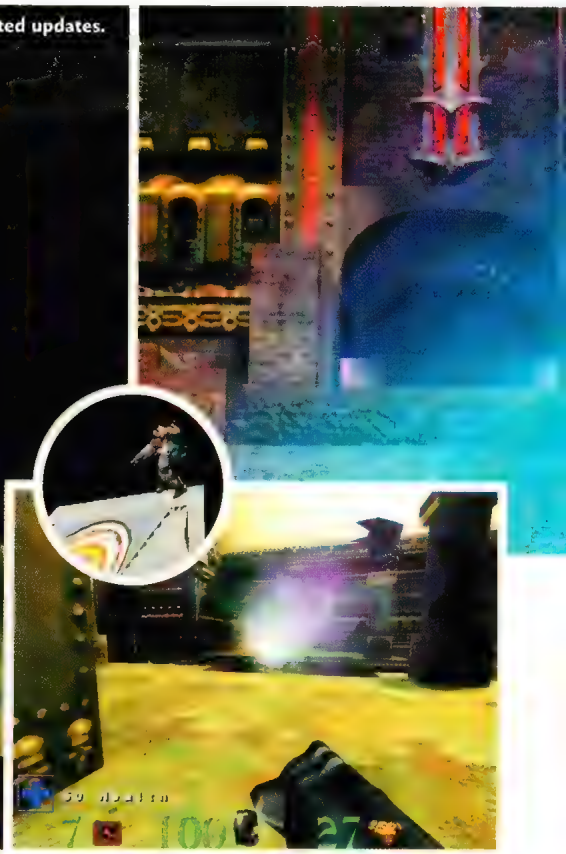
Do you think that games can adversely affect people's behaviour?
I guess *Theme Park World* might make a few people ride too many rollercoasters and eat too many burgers!

QUAKE III ARENA

The test release is out on the streets. We put on our analysis heads and our special gib-splattered lab coats to investigate...

By KIERON GILLEN

PREVIOUSLY ON... << We first brought you *QIII* in PCG 62, while 68 and 69 had excited updates.



(Above) The expensive, green Persian carpet, soon to be stained red with the blood of the gladiators who fight. With rocket launchers.

QUAKE III AT A GLANCE

Publisher: Activision

Developer: Id

Genre: First-Person Shooter

Estimated Minimum System: P233 with 3D acceleration, 64Mb RAM

Special Features: 3D acceleration, 3D sound

Release Date: November

What's in it for you: Id's multi-player expertise at its leanest 'n' meanest

MONDAY the eleventh of May. A specially constructed button marked 'Upload' is pressed, sending the PC technology test of *Quake III Arena* swimming free into the info-ocean. Several trillion deathmatch fans throw out their nets, capture it and install it on their waiting computers. We do too. Because it's important.

While this release is just to test compatibility issues, it still looks visually appealing enough to make you kiss your monitor lovingly, pick your whole computer system up and take it to bed. There have been a couple of propositions of marriage in the office too. But, being objective for a second, how does it play?

ANOTHER LEVEL

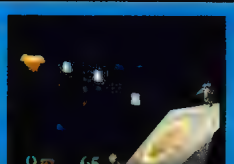
The two included levels present several hints about the final game. For a start, the speed of play is much higher than the leisurely stomp of *Quake II*, nearer the banzai-charge momentum of the original. This has led some lovers of *QII* to claim this reduces the amount of skill inherent in winning. This observer would report that it appears to be demanding *different* skills, such as an understanding of crowd dynamics and how to prey upon them.

QTEST1 is the larger of the two levels, including various secret areas and some stunning portal effects. There have been appreciative rounds of applause for the gargoyles too. More unusual is QTEST2, a considerably smaller level made even more intense by its form: it's made of individual platforms suspended, unassisted, in the ether. And you travel between them

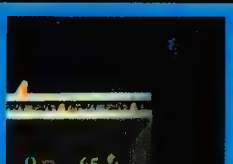
THE QUAD THAT WE WANT

I've already mentioned the QTEST2 utilisation of trampolines, and here's a step-by-step example. Far above the arena is a single platform with an ever-so-juicy quad damage power-up. To reach it you have to perform a task of such airborne skill that, upon succeeding, you should consider giving up computer games and popping off to the circus to be a death-defying acrobat of some description.

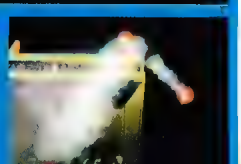
Hop onto the five-sided trampoline near the middle...



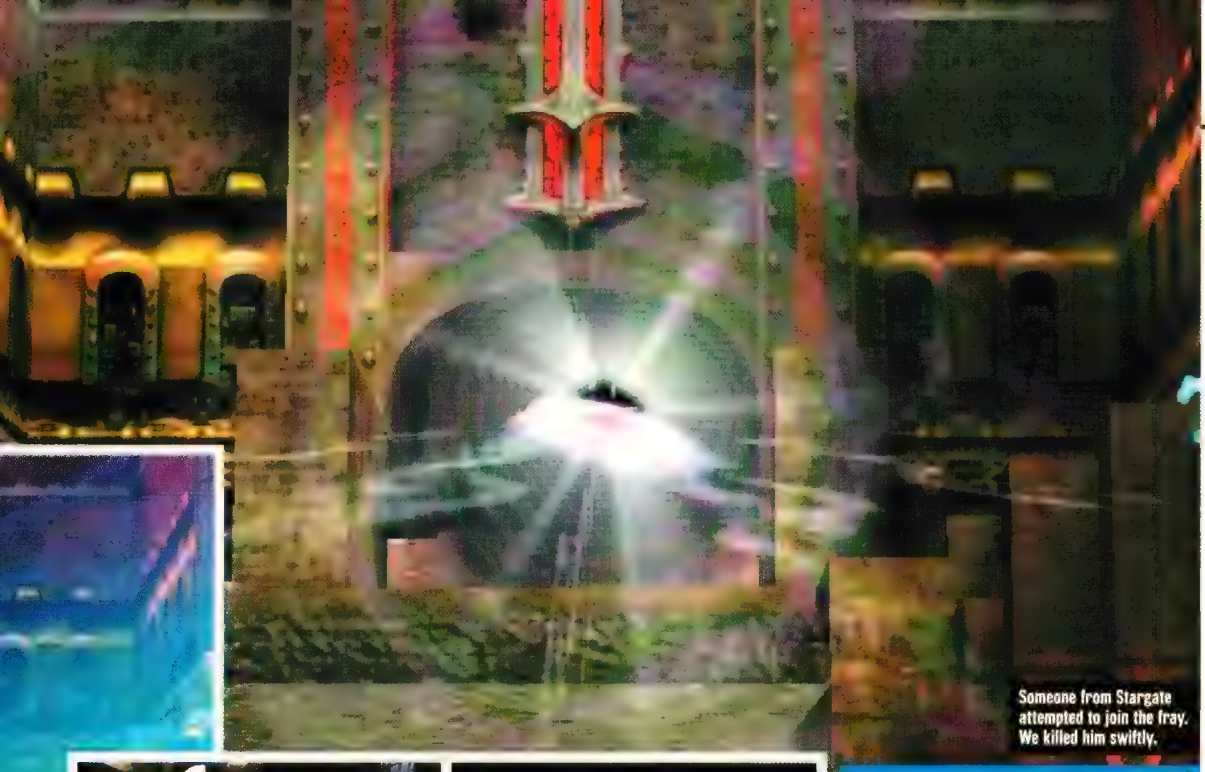
Then wobble about, aiming towards this platform...



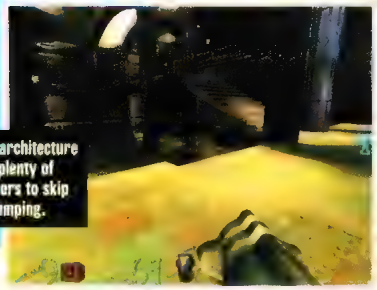
And BOOING! You're suddenly quadded-up in the penthouse.



From where you can rain fiery quad-death.



Someone from Stargate attempted to join the fray. We killed him swiftly.



The architecture has plenty of corners to skip by jumping.

"FASTER THAN *QUAKE II*... MORE LIKE THE BANZAI-CHARGE MOMENTUM OF THE ORIGINAL."

via a series of bouncy pads. This means that a single mistake, or the cunning application of knock-back physics by your foes, can send you spinning helplessly into the arms of the abyss. Erk.

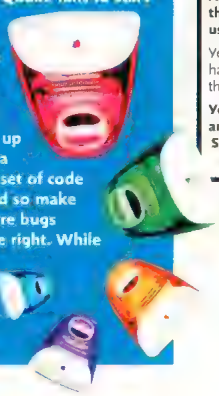
METAL MICKEY

In terms of weaponry, only the machine gun, shotgun, rocket launcher, rail-gun and plasma gun are operational, with a gauntlet for when your default machine gun runs our of ammunition. Despite the names being familiar, there have been a number of changes in their potency. At the moment, rockets seem to dominate the game, with the rail-gun, with its decreased damage and speed, being increasingly obsolete. Of course, the play-balancing can, and probably will, change before the real release. A zoom has been added, a handy boon for all the campers in our midst, and the personal Star-trek-esque teleport has been clutched to our warm bosoms.

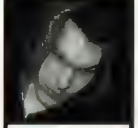
While only a test, this all points towards *QIII* achieving much of its great potential. And it's interesting to note that the levels, while entertaining, seem like they would quite easily be navigable by computer-controlled bots. Hmm. PCG

RETURN OF THE MAC

The most controversial thing about the *Quake III* releases has been the fact that the Linux and Mac versions were available first, leading some hardcore *Quake* fans to start shouting "Judas" at Id. Their explanation: since the other two are smaller groups, there's less people to be offended by the initial roughness. They'll pick up the major bugs, giving a much more impressive set of code for PC users to play, and so make finding the more obscure bugs more likely. And they're right. While the Mac version's nice, our version both runs cleaner and looks better. So hurrah for that, then.



OF THEIR OWN VOLITION



[illegible] GAMER Art [illegible] the Mac

In 20 words, Nathan, why should we be excited about *Quake III*?

It's the only good game on the Mac, isn't it? It's a damn good frag fest

What's the one feature you're happiest with so far?

The last game on the Mac was *Quake*. All of *QIII* just defecates over that.

Are you harder than the PC users?

Yeah. We've had it longer than you.

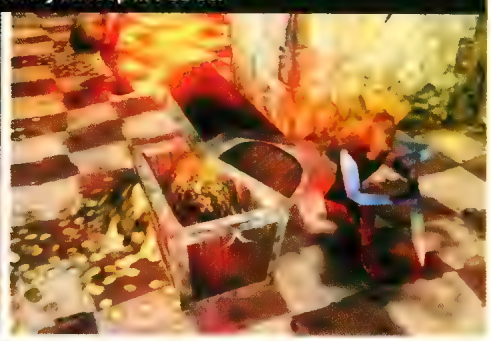
You and whose army, Art? See you at lunchtime.

DUNGEON KEEPER 2

It's a tempting piece of gaol bait.

By MARK DONALD

PREVIOUSLY ON... << The last time *Dungeon Keeper 2* touched our black hearts was during a Scoop in PCG 60.



Sentries now have the nous to report back when heroes invade your dungeon. Your creatures will then seek the source of the trouble and deal with the threat.

DUNGEON KEEPER AT A GLANCE

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Developer: Bullfrog

Genre: Real Time Strategy

Estimated Minimum System: P200, 32Mb RAM, 3D card optional

Special Features: The 'Pet Dungeon' mode will let you build till your black heart's content, without having to do any fighting.

Release Date: July

What's in it for you: It's *Theme Park* meets real-time strategy with a twist. Construct your own house of pain, fill it with monsters, train and feed them, then do battle against goody-goody heroes. At last.

LIKE a clique of turtle-necked art critics stroking their goatees over a light switch in a modern art gallery, nobody who played the original *Dungeon Keeper* could quite decide if they were dealing with genius or had just been had.

On the one hand it was an incredible idea. As a budding master-fiend, you got to plan, build and expand your very own centre of evil excellence. With a handful of minions to brutalise, you could dig rooms and corridors out of bare rock, and populate them with all kinds of monsters to fight the inevitable heroes who'd happen along to nick your gold. The result was an incredibly detailed commune of pulsating evil, which seemed to combine elements of real-time strategy, *Theme Park* and even first-person 3D games.

"EVERY DUNGEON HAS A TORTURE CHAMBER WHERE YOU GET TO PLAY THE MALEVOLENT HOST TO YOUR 'GUESTS'."

Unfortunately, over on the other hand, it didn't all quite fit together. Many elements proved superfluous and in the end *Dungeon Keeper* became very repetitive.

Ideal conditions then for a wicked sequel that retains the original vision while re-engineering the more ramshackle bits to create a truly great game. Enter *Dungeon Keeper 2*.

EVIL RETRIEVAL

The most blatant improvement is the graphics. The entire engine has been rebuilt so now your underlings are fashioned from polygons rather than pre-rendered sprites. With their smoother animations and convincing shadows they look much more at home in the 3D dungeon, which has also had a lick of paint. The various torture rooms, lairs and hatcheries are far clearer and more detailed than before, tallying altogether more credibly with the black pits in your mind's eye.

Slipping effortlessly into the arch-villain's role, a quick play-test soon availed us of the other advances in dungeon keeping, like the new combat system. Moving away from the original's disappointing free-for-all affair, Bullfrog have given every creature-type a specialist role to play (see the 'Hive of Villainy' bit),

HIVE OF VILLAINY

The new combat system allows you to exploit your minions with more guile than before. Each one has an important role to play in the black art of dungeon warfare.

Name: Bile Demon
Position in the food chain: Blocker

Bile Demons clearly aren't going anywhere fast, so you can rely on them to stand and defend strategic points without running off to attack the enemy.

Name: Mistress
Position in the food chain: Flanker

The nimble dominatrix prefers shock attacks and so will work her way through passages to get around the enemy and hit them in the rear.

Name: Black Knight
Position in the food chain: Blitzer

Good all-rounders, Black Knights will try to punch a hole straight through the enemy and attack their support creatures sheltering behind the lines.

Name: Warlock
Position in the food chain: Support

Warlocks like to hang around at the back showing off with spectacular spells, but are complete fairies when it comes to fisticuffs. Need careful nursing.

Name: Imp
Position in the food chain: Bottom feeder

The much-bullied Imp won't ever fight, and just squeals distressingly when trapped. Very distasteful.

so at last you can fight battles tactically rather than just relying on weight of numbers. What's more, every monster is at the mercy of a fear/threat hierarchy that'll see the little guys run away in the face of terrifying entities like Dark Angels, until they can gather a big enough mob to go back and overpower their higher level foe. Indeed, the first time a jobbing bunch of heroes broke into our dungeon, imp no. 1 legged it straight back to the guard room to request back-up.

EVIL CONVIVIAL

Of course, every dungeon must have a torture chamber where you get to play the malevolent host to your 'guests'. 'Guests' being heroes you've stunned in combat and dragged back to your lair to convert to your cause. There are a number of different techniques you can try – straight physical pain, slightly classier mental cruelty (try leaving some food within sight, but out of reach) – it'll probably be a whole sub-game in itself. Once you've converted some heroes, their powerful special abilities are at your disposal. Which brings us to the first-person element. In the original you could possess any of your creatures and wander round your dungeon seeing the world through their eyes – compound in the case of the fireflies. It was great, but completely pointless. Bullfrog have addressed this by giving each creature more special powers that can only be accessed in possessive mode. For instance, as a vampire you can hypnotise enemy characters. Once entranced you can convince them to wade in against their mates.

A bit of light relief never goes amiss in a dungeon. Among the animated cut-scenes expect a tennis-playing giant who serves with a chicken and disco dancing goblins.

The good health of *Dungeon Keeper 2* would seem to be assured then. Particularly when you consider that Bullfrog are mixing up the expand and exploit levels with more specific missions like rescue, escort and ambush. There's even an over-arching goal to achieve, of which we cannot yet speak.

Only a diabolical madman could mess this up now Ahahahahahahahahaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa...

MY PET DUNGEON

Sometimes it's great just to build without the day-to-day hassles of torturing heroes and bringing despair to the world. Which is where the Pet Dungeon comes in. It's an expansion of the paint-box mode and lets you construct your ideal dungeon unrestrained by resource limits or intruders. Though you can always bring in a couple of 'test heroes' if you want to try out your new defence system. Heh-heh.

OF THEIR OWN VOLITION

Executive Producer Dan Stapley speaks to PC GAMER

In 20 words, why should we be excited about *Planescape: Torment?*
Torment has classic RPG gameplay, but an untraditional setting, allowing for unique characters and plot lines our audience hasn't seen before

What's your favourite feature so far?
Our new spell effects are incredible. They go from nicely understated effects to completely over-the-top destruction-fests

Which games have been your inspiration?
Origin's *Ultima IV*, the classic puzzle games from Cliff Johnson, *The Fool's Errand* and *3 in Three*.

Do you think that games can really adversely affect people's personality and behaviour?
Yes, but only insofar as if an individual playing games is already psychologically troubled. Without a firm grounding in the real world (friends, loved ones, desires and goals) there is no telling what could set someone off.

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

Take your mind to another dimension. An evil horrible one. **By KIERON GILLEN**

PREVIOUSLY ON... << We first looked at *Planescape* in PCG 68, where we explored the game world and the lead character.

A bridge over troubled waters. Or trouble over a bridge. One of the two.

The *Planescape* universe bulges with unusual characters. Like GAMER.

I WAS thinking about this the other day. How did the collecting of magic swords and gold pieces manage to squeeze itself into role-playing games? After all, there's not a single fantasy book where there's such a blasé attitude towards acquiring new wealth.

Example. The Hobbit. Bilbo gaining the Ring is the most important event in the entire book, leading on to the whole Lord Of The Rings malarkey. It *mattered*. Modern paper based RPGs have moved towards character development and away from endless corpse robbing. How come we gamers are stuck in a 1970s primitive state, eh? Luckily, *Planescape: Torment's* on a one game quest to turn computer RPGs from soulless slash and-burn into a personality paradise

Take inter-party politics. In the average RPG, recruiting an extra member just adds extra limbs to your monster killing machine In *Torment* it's a major decision. Because when someone first enters your party all you know is their strength, magic capabilities and hit points. You won't know what class they are or what skills they possess until they actually display them. Equally, you won't know their alignment until they start acting accordingly. Assessment of your party is a

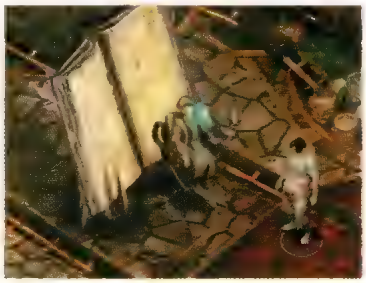
"BELLIGERENT CHUMS WILL LEAVE THE PARTY IF YOU ACT AGAINST THEIR MORAL SCRUPLES."

I don't think that skull-motif on the codpiece will really catch on.

new game element. Get it wrong and you could have a psycho thief in your midst.

Since your colleagues are generally rather extreme individuals you can expect your party to, well, not just be one big party. Belligerent chums will interrupt your speech to NPCs if they think it's important enough, or leave the party if you start acting against their moral scruples. There are even two female NPCs who are both desperately in love with you, and spend their time bitching, insulting and even physically attacking each other. A woman scorned, eh?

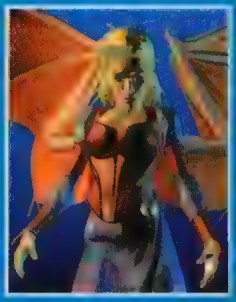
Planescape: Torment is attempting to be iconoclastic in the most stereotyped of genres. We're cheering it on. PC



YOU GOTTA FIGHT! FOR YOUR RIGHT! TO PARTAAAAAEEEEEEE!

Since the game's set in a refreshingly elf-less pandimensional city, you wouldn't expect your co-adventurers to be bearded gentlemen in chainmail. And you'd be correct in that assumption. While there are only 11 [illegible], they're all more detailed and complicated than *Baldur's Gate*'s analogues. Let's meet a few, eh?

Say hello to Mort, who claims that his body walked off because he was too sarcastic to live with. He'll be the first of the 11 fully detailed possible party members who crosses your path. Among his shamanistic powers is the ability to use his insulting barbed wit to taunt people to death. Somewhat like James then, all things considered.



This is the delightful Fall-From-Grace, who's a strangely puritanical succubus. A contradiction in terms, of course, but it's another great example of *Planescape*'s desire to wrestle against the lazy expectations we have when most people play RPGs. Like merry hobbits. And evil orcs.

And finally, Bhalior. He's the truest, most altruistic knight to ever exist. He cared for others so much he didn't even notice his own death and decay. Now he's an animated suit of armour. He's an extremely powerful fighter, but his strong arm can be lost if you start murdering innocents.

PLANESCAPE AT A GLANCE

Developer: Black Isle

Genre: RPG

Estimated Minimum System: P166, 32Mb RAM

Special Features: First use of the most bonkers AD&D world licence yet seen

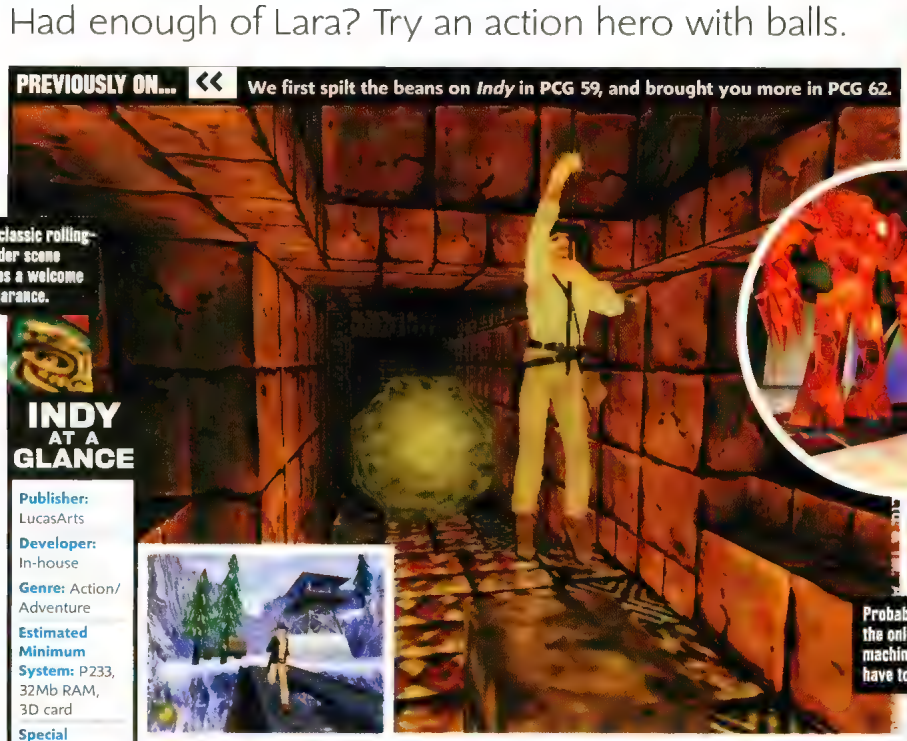
Release Date: July 1999

What's in it for you: *Baldur's Gate*'s with a more original setting

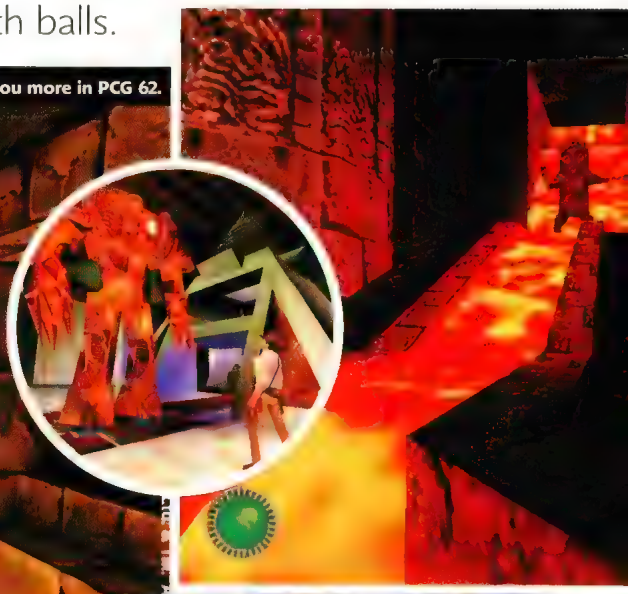
INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

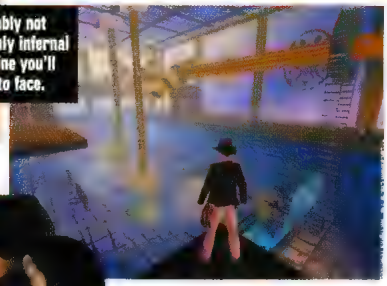
Had enough of Lara? Try an action hero with balls.

PREVIOUSLY ON... << We first spilt the beans on *Indy* in PCG 59, and brought you more in PCG 62.



The classic rolling-boulder scene makes a welcome appearance.





Probably not the only infernal machine you'll have to face.

INDY AT A GLANCE

Publisher: LucasArts

Developer: In-house

Genre: Action/Adventure

Estimated Minimum System: P233, 32Mb RAM, 3D card

Special Features: 3D card essential, multi-player option

Release Date: November

What's in it for you? Lara-style adventuring with everyone's favourite archaeologist

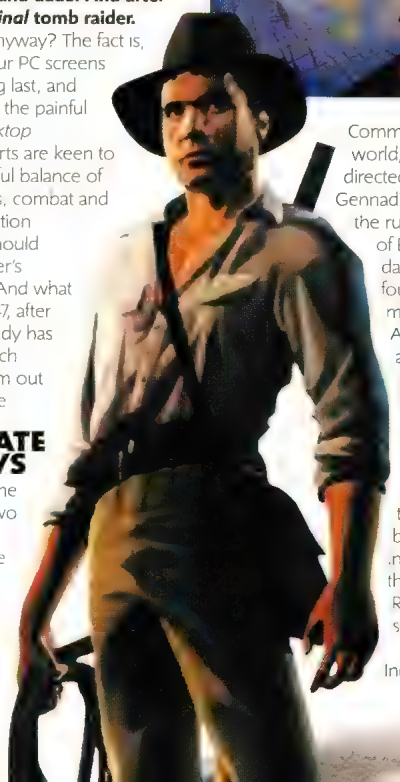
IT would be all too easy to dismiss *Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine* as a cash-in *Tomb Raider* clone. After all, as LucasArts so proudly state, it's an action-adventure game with fiendish puzzles, exploration and combat, viewed from a floating third-person camera. So far, so Lara. But *The Infernal Machine* is a natural progression from *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis*, a point-and-clicker originally released when PCs were made from wattle and daub. And after all, Indy is the *original* tomb raider.

Who cares, anyway? The fact is, Indy is coming to our PC screens in proper 3D at long last, and will be laying to rest the painful memory of his *Desktop Adventures*. LucasArts are keen to emphasise the careful balance of exploration, puzzles, combat and exciting set piece action sequences which should strengthen the player's interest in the plot. And what a plot it is: set in 1947, after the fall of Nazism, Indy has found some new arch enemies to keep him out of the lecture theatre.

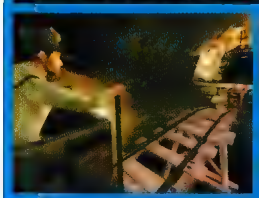
NAZIS. I HATE THOSE GUYS

Yes, it's the start of the cold war and, just two years after fighting together to keep the world free and safe, the West and Russia are at each others' throats. In order to impose Communism upon the world, Uncle Joe Stalin has directed renowned physicist Gennadi Volodnikov to search the ruins of the ancient city of Babylon. There, the dastardly Commies found an ancient and mystical machine – the Aetherium – which acts as a gateway to a parallel dimension. Quite how that would help them is anyone's guess, but that's hardly the point. Several fragments of the machine have been lost, and it is Indy's quest to find them all before the Russkies do, and thusly save the world.

Unfortunately for Indy, the fragments have



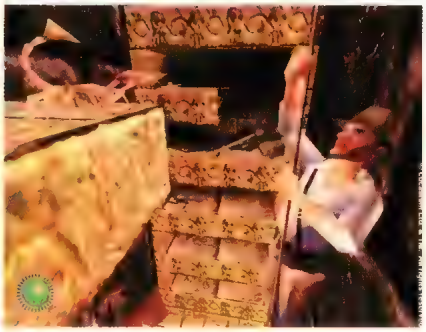
MAGICAL MOVIE MOMENTS



With a wealth of exciting moments and action sequences in the three Indiana Jones films, LucasArts have no shortage of inspiration for the game. The mine-cart chase from The Temple of Doom is, as you can see, beautifully and excitingly recreated, but other scenes have been translated less literally. For example, Indy uses a jeep extensively to get around one level (including a daredevil rope bridge crossing), and it's safe to assume that Indy's famed fear of snakes will be well-represented...

Desperate for a hot bath, Indy weighs up the pros and cons.

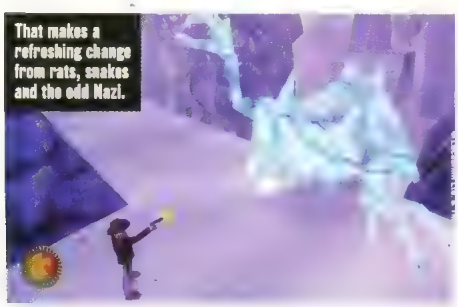
(Below) Crawling into dark corners is bound to bring you face to face with some of nature's less friendly creatures.



"A CAREFUL BALANCE OF EXPLORATION, PUZZLES, COMBAT AND ACTION."

been scattered all over the world, which paves the way for international adventures on a grand scale. Apart from the ruins of Babylon, you can expect to be shooting, leaping, swinging, climbing and fighting your way in temples, valleys, deserts and dungeons in places as diverse as Nubia, Kazakstan and the Philippines. And as if that weren't enough, LucasArts recently commenced work on some multi-player areas to allow budding Dr Joneses to whip each other. Although it sounds funny when you put it like that.

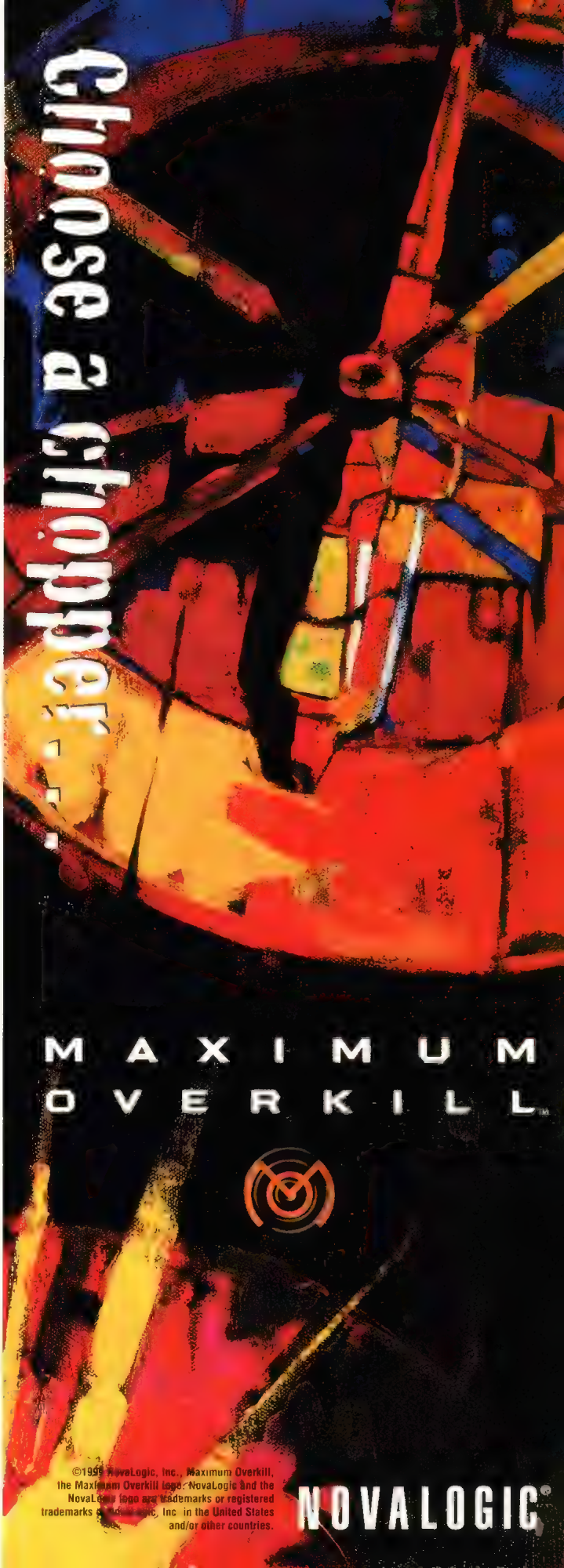
Perhaps it's no coincidence that the release of *Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine* will coincide with the release of Lara's fourth outing. LucasArts are no doubt predicting that we'll all be bored by the chesty adventuress by then, and hanker for something a little more gritty. And, when it comes to bold adventuring, it doesn't get much grittier than Indy. PCG



That makes a refreshing change from rats, snakes and the odd Nazi.

WHIPS 'N' STUFF

Where would Indy be without his trusty whip? Or, for that matter, a reliable revolver? Hmm. Better throw in an automatic, a couple of rifles, a bazooka, a few grenades and some satchel charges for those really stubborn stains. After all, this isn't Hollywood, baby, and Indy is as vulnerable as you or I out there in the big bad world. Suitably equipped, you'll have no excuse not to slap down the Russkies and any multi-player enemies you care to challenge.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NOVALOGIC

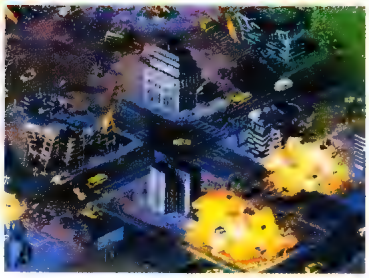
C&C: TIBERIAN SUN

Coquettish Westwood tease us with another glimpse up their development skirt.

By MARK DONALD

PREVIOUSLY ON... << It's been a desperately empty 11 months since we last gazed wistfully at *Tiberian Sun*, back in PCG 60.

The coloured lighting is coming on nicely, as is the destructible scenery, as demonstrated by the Orca gunships (left).



C&C 2 AT A GLANCE

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Developer: Westwood

Genre: Real-time strategy

Estimated Minimum System: P133, no 3D card

Special Features: Voxel graphics will keep the minimum specs low

Release Date: September

What's in it for you: It's the sequel to *C&C*, the world's favourite real-time strategy game. Expect two distinctive armies, near flawless unit balance, and levels honed till the designers' brains bleed.

A SNATCH here, a sniff there. **Trying to get hold of anything tangible on *Tiberian Sun* has been like asking the Pope for permission to go out with his illegitimate daughter. But even wicked step-father Westwood couldn't keep the world's most desired real-time strategy game under lock and key during the free-loving videogame festival that is E3. We almost got to play it.**

Unfortunately, the substantial Westwood chaperone protecting *Tib Sun*'s modesty got all-too involved and wouldn't stop hogging the damn mouse. But even though he had all the fun, we still saw plenty to get excited about.

It's now obvious that Westwood aren't tormenting us all just for a laugh but are taking ages over finishing touches like unit balance and level design.

COME ON THEN!

Many of the missions have multiple objectives. Although the secondary tasks aren't compulsory, they will make it easier to complete your primary goals. In one NOD mission, for example, rebel forces are moving against your position. But the secondary objective is to capture a television station and make a propaganda transmission to the rebs. Pull it off and they'll join you in the assault on the primary objective. It's en-route surprises like this that have been missing from RTS games for too long, and their liberal deployment in *Tiberian Sun* should ensure it continues to wrong-foot and surprise gamers throughout the 50 single-player missions planned.

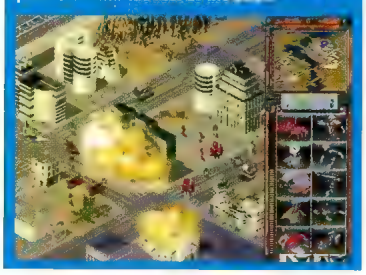
"EN-ROUTE SURPRISES SHOULD WRONG-FOOT YOU THROUGHOUT THE 50 SINGLE-PLAYER MISSIONS."

The other key to the *C&C* masterplan is the development of two distinctive and well-matched opponents. Right now, most of the design team are playing *Tib Sun* non-stop to ensure the Global Defence Initiative and the Brotherhood of NOD are perfectly balanced. The GDI are the heavyweight bruisers, reliant on airpower and their new jump jet infantry which can even engage aerial opponents once they've gained some experience. They're also bringing along the Deployable Sensor Array which 'listens out' for burrowing enemy tanks and stealth units – marking a welcome escalation in information warfare. The NOD, meanwhile, rely on speed and stealth. Most of their units possess some chameleon-like ability, or, like the Devil's Tongue vehicle, can tunnel under surface defences and pop up in the middle of the enemy base.

Nothing in *Tiberian Sun* suggests a RTS revolution is in the offing. Instead, Westwood have spent the best part of two years honing every last, fiddly gameplay detail. The waiting is nearly over. Just. Hang. On. PCG

WHY ARE WE WAITING?

If you want one good reason why *Tiberian Sun* is taking so long then check out this screenshot. It's from the last batch 11 months ago and is but an unsightly beast in comparison to the full-bodied beauties that prance around the rest of the page.



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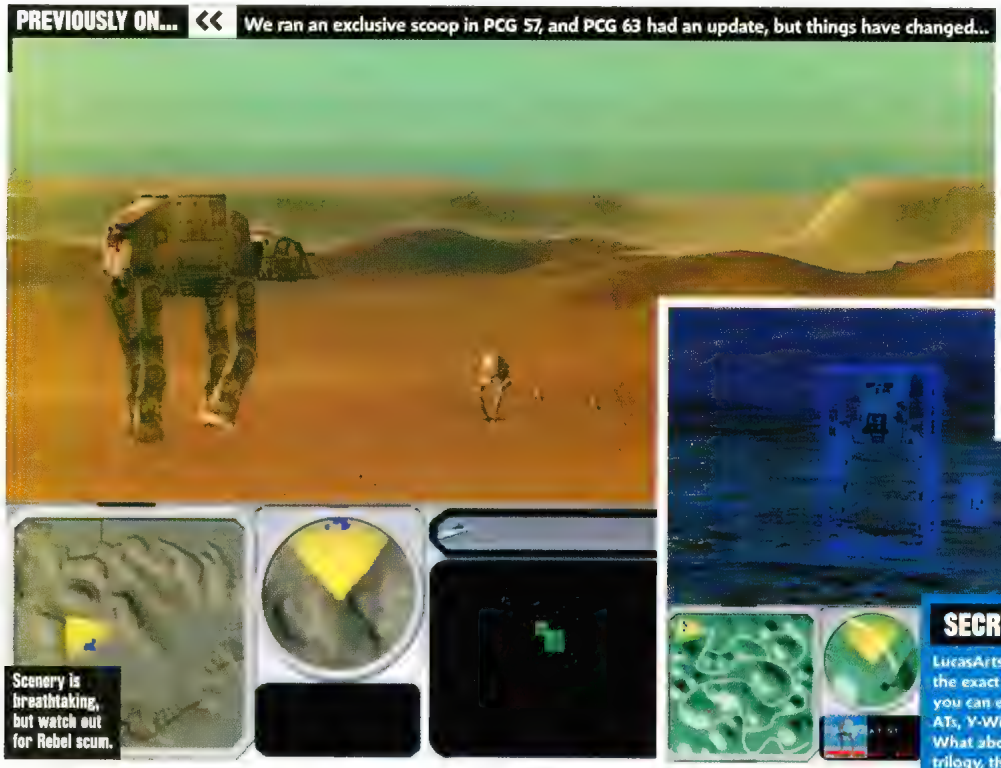
FORCE COMMANDER

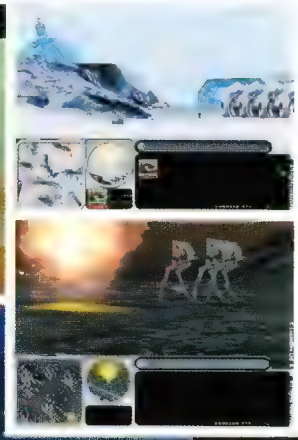
It's all so confusing. New film, set before old film. New game, set during old films and between old games. But it *is* an old game. Er.

By ROSS ATHERTON

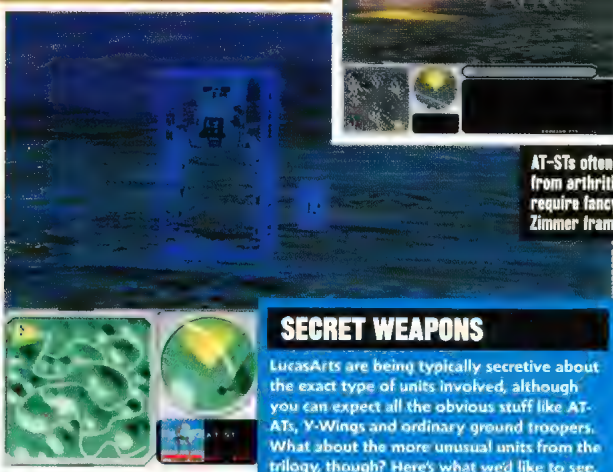
PREVIOUSLY ON... << We ran an exclusive scoop in PCG 57, and PCG 63 had an update, but things have changed...



Scenery is breathtaking, but watch out for Rebel scum.



AT-STs often suffer from arthritis, and require fancy blue Zimmer frames.



SECRET WEAPONS

LucasArts are being typically secretive about the exact type of units involved, although you can expect all the obvious stuff like AT-ATs, Y-Wings and ordinary ground troopers. What about the more unusual units from the trilogy, though? Here's what we'd like to see.

1. Ewok glider. See just how easy it is to kill Stormtroopers with a bit of leather, some string and a few pebbles.

2. Jabba's sail barge. Replete with a Princess in a gilt bikini, of course.

3. Boba Fett's ship, Slave-1. Because it looks like an enormous Dustbuster.

4. Jawa sand crawler. Supercharge it and send the little buggers scurrying.

FORCE COMMANDER AT A GLANCE

Publisher: LucasArts

Developer: In-house

Genre: Real Time Strategy

Estimated Minimum System: P233, 32Mb RAM

Special Features: 3D card NOT required

Release Date: November

What's in it for you: 3D *C&C* with Star Wars units! What more could you want?

WHEN we first scooped *Force Commander*, way back in June of last year, we were bursting with excitement about it. Which is quite understandable, not just because we get excited about anything to do with Star Wars (which we do), but also because it promised to bring true 3D units and landscapes into the successful RTS mix. And while it looked pretty good for the time, we did have a sneaking suspicion that it might just end up as *Total Annihilation* with AT-ATs.

But we're no longer worried, because the style of *Force Commander*'s presentation has changed completely so that it looks more like *Rogue Squadron* than a conventional RTS. As well as being able to assume the first-person viewpoint of *any* vehicle or unit under your command, you can take advantage of the many floating cameras dotted around the landscape to control your troops and survey the battle.

The range of missions stretches over the entire original trilogy, from the search for the droids on Tatooine to the Battle of Endor. Although you can't play any of the space-based missions (hey, we've got *Alliance* for blowing up Death Stars), you'll still be able to play through such magical movie moments as the Battle of Hoth. There's also a full campaign for both the Rebel and Empire sides, which will take in worlds never seen before in Star Wars films or games. The lush rainforests of Yavin 4, Corellia's plains and even the ice-caps of Coruscant offer varying settings for you to wreak destruction.

"THE MISSIONS STRETCH OVER THE ENTIRE ORIGINAL TRILOGY."

Stormtrooper parties tend to lack atmosphere.

So far, it looks as if *Force Commander* will be a must-buy for any fan of RTS or Star Wars. However, *Star Wars: Supremacy* showed us how LucasArts can make a spectacular balls-up of things when they try something new, and so *FC*'s success is not guaranteed. Judging by the project's current status, though, it looks like it's well on course to give *Tiberian Sun* a run for its money. PCG

F-22 LIGHTNING 3

GO ON... ...STRIKE!

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This isn't a game for the nineties, it's a game for the next millennium.

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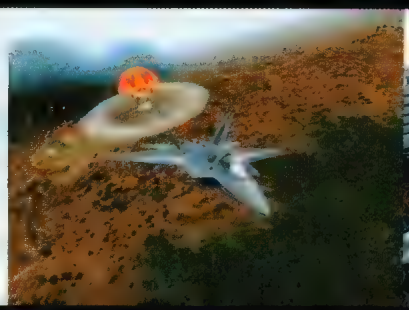

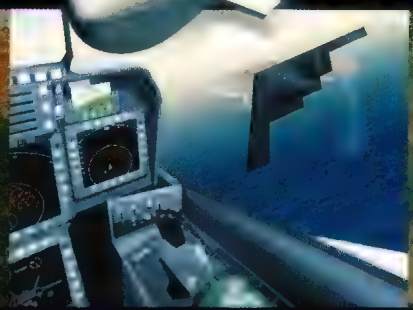

NOVALOGIC - THE ART OF WAR™

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With *Populous, Theme Park* and *Dungeon Keeper* under his belt, we didn't expect to find Peter Molyneux nervously coding the day before the first public showing of *Black And White*. But then it was about to be the first game ever to be put before the august members of BAFTA... After a decade making games, he remains our most visionary developer.

PETER MOLYNEUX

BY OWAIN BENNALLACK

First of all, our apologies! Just before a BAFTA presentation is a terrible time to do an interview...
[Laughs] Actually, last week – or even yesterday – would have been far worse. It has suddenly started to look really good! But the game is still very much halfway through development.

It's surprising to find a senior figure like yourself programming...
I can't make a game without getting totally immersed. The best way to do that is to program.

Don't you end up specialising in just one part of the game?
I have my special areas, yes, but it also gives me an understanding of what is going on globally. That's important, because making a game is not down to one person anymore.

That's a common perception in your case...
My only role in the whole of *Black And White*'s creation was the initial two-page concept document. From then on we've all created the game. Of course, if we've got a choice of two paths to take then I am there to help choose the left one or the right one. But I don't see *Black And White* as a culmination of my experiences – it's a culmination of all my mistakes. Hopefully corrected!

Where were those mistakes?
Well, I think I've messed up some very cool games. *Populous* was pretty good and *Theme Park* wasn't bad, but *Powermonger* could have been so much cooler and *Dungeon Keeper* definitely lost it somewhere along the way.

***Dungeon Keeper* was a great game. The initial idea of turning the player's role around into being the bad guy was excellent...**
But it wasn't quite there. The interface was really horrible. Whenever I think of a game in my head, I never imagine the interface. I see myself playing the game, immersed in a world. Bolting the interface on always feels like just that – bolting the interface on. The interface is often a barrier for what you can do. I've realised that has to be turned on its head, and that's where a lot of the inspiration for *Black And White* came from.

That's an unusual sort of inspiration.
The seminal moment was when I walked into PC World and they had *Dungeon Keeper* on a monitor. A 12-year old kid was playing it. I thought, "Great, I'll stand back and watch." But he didn't know what to do. He was clicking on the buttons, he was moving the mouse around and eventually he got the camera so close to the side of the wall that he totally lost it and he just walked away.

Do you think you've solved these problems in *Black And White?*
Well... you'll have to judge that for yourself. It's coming along. It's good...

Do you think
[interrupts fervently] I don't know why I just said that, I think it's great! It is amazingly cool. And I've never said that before. [Hesitates] But you'll have to judge for yourself...

Maybe your games have just been more complicated than the average console title.
No, I think it is that PC programmers have been extremely lazy. We've made the fatal mistake of emulating Windows with its windows and icons. Compare that with the purist approach of the console world. You've got four buttons – now create a game. What we've done with *Black And White* is look at the mouse and say, "Okay you move it up and down and that's how it should be in the game." It's true, there is no interface, there are no icons. Everything is there on the screen.

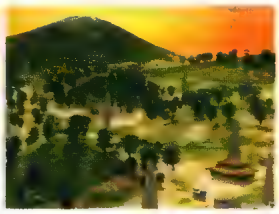
I've long said the biggest revolution that could happen in gaming is a better way to interface with the game. Make something too techie or gamer orientated and you're only going to appeal to gamers. We continue to ignore everyone else out there! The whole world wants computer gaming to be a mass-market entertainment – except us. One of the big player's logo is even "Made by gamers, for gamers" and that just about sums up this industry. We need to break outside of that

How?
One way is to make a visually stunning game, so that my mother, my father or my girlfriend can sit down and say "Yes, I can recognise what that is" and then not confuse them with icons. Looking at Sony's PlayStation 2, for instance, there is every sign we're going to see some stunning visual scenery but when you say "I want to do this, this and this", will you be able to? Will it actually do what you expect?

It seems people are always talking about doing things for the mass market. Should dedicated gamers feel cheated? After all, the PlayStation charts are full of football and driving games...
Well, the danger is that we will dumb down computer games, but that is exactly what we

Black And White

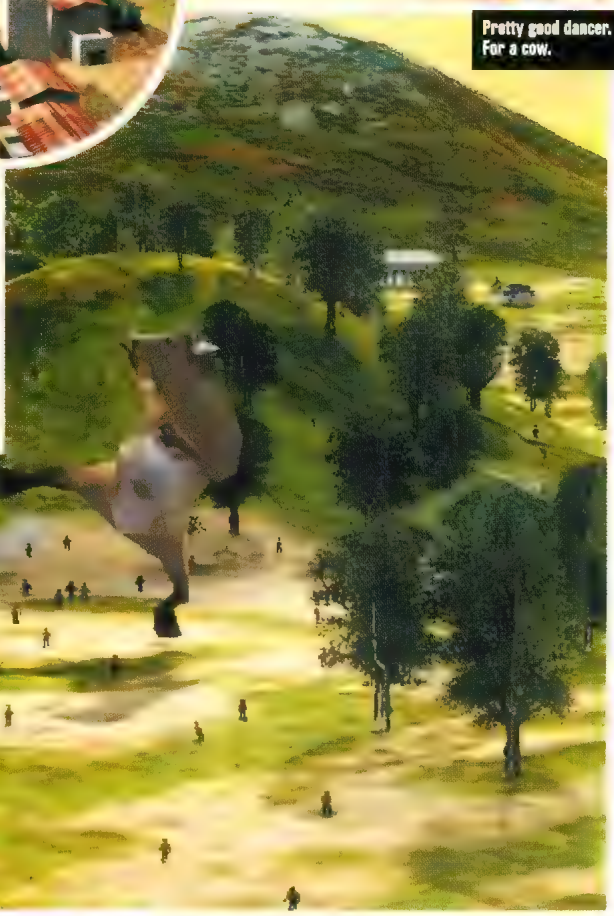
Unsurprisingly not about Mr Jackson.

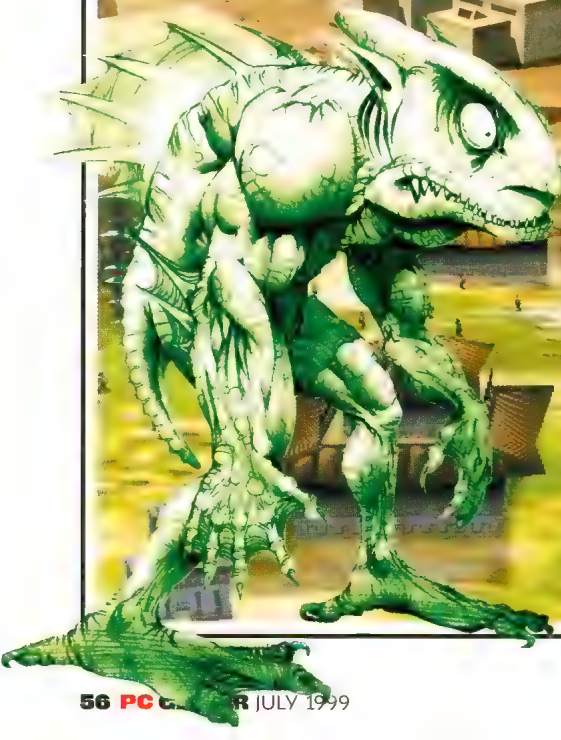


Half completed, and *Black And White's* sense of scale is already breathtaking.

The headed-giants seem to have an Egyptian God inspiration to them.

Pretty good dancer. For a cow.





"There haven't been emotion games – there isn't even a genre called emotion games! There should be; we should be doing something with all this computing power. Even on the Commodore 64 you had *Little Computer People*."

[redacted]

[illegible] can't do. We have to make games even more complicated so that they recognise and accommodate themselves to your requirements. That is what a computer game can do that no other entertainment medium can, and that's extremely exciting.

Are you attempting that in *Black And White*?
Absolutely it's one of the design concepts.

Is it a matter of difficulty levels, or will the game actually change my goals?
Everything changes. Every aspect of the game changes that's the trick. If you try to kludge it, it just wouldn't work. So yes, even the story will change, rather like in the Fighting Fantasy books that Steve Jackson [a Lionhead director] created. You and I could complete a Fighting Fantasy book and see totally different things, yet we'd both enjoy the book.

Except that I'd keep turning backwards and forwards to make sure I hadn't missed anything!
Yes, well there's always a way, isn't there... But anyway, the really interesting thing is to design a game where the challenges you're presented with change depending on how you reacted to the challenges in the past.

My inspiration for this was *Ultima III*. At the very beginning, Richard Garriot asked you seven questions. Something like, "You've got five gold coins in your pocket and you need to buy a sword but you see a beggar starving in the street. Do you (a) throw the money in his face, (b) help him get to his feet and get him something to eat" and so on. Why not do it in software? Why not look and say, "Owain has done this in the past and therefore the sort of challenges he's going to meet are these."

Beating games in the past has usually involved discovering patterns in the problems you're facing and then honing your skills to beat them but you could keep changing the patterns.
It sounds hugely complicated but actually it's fairly easy. It's motivated me to be ambitious with *Black And White*. With my previous games, especially with *Dungeon Keeper*, people would always come up and say, "I enjoyed Dungeon Keeper, great game but I only got to, say, Level 8 and then I got bored." And other people would say, "*Dungeon Keeper*, great game, I loved exploring around but I hated how each level ended I wanted to keep exploring."

How the heck am I supposed to balance that? If the game balances itself, you don't have those problems. That is our fundamental philosophy.

Writing a story that changes will be tough, won't it?
Yes, I keep saying to people in the film and television industry, "Look, you find it hard enough to create a script for a half-hour TV show, just wait until you try to write a game script." Instead of trying to create a script that will appeal to everyone, we need an insight into who a particular person is. That would be pretty powerful.

It would be interesting to ask Shakespeare what he thought about it, though. Part of the essence of storytelling has been to show people something that they might not want to see, but perhaps teach them something.
Well, I was contacted once by someone doing research into tribal storytelling. What she had found was that the old tribal storytellers used to watch their audience while telling their story. If the audience laughed at one bit, the story would become slightly different, if they cried it would change again. We could do that in games

Do you think any games over the last year have made any progress in those areas?
No, there haven't been emotion games – there isn't even a genre called emotion games! There should be; we should be doing something with all this computing power. Even on the Commodore 64 you had *Little Computer People*.

It seems weird that people are looking towards PlayStation 2 with its 'emotion engine' for that sort of thing. People berate PC gamers for being so hardcore, but if you look at the games made for the PC, it seems to be where much of the innovation happens.
Well yes, if you look at America, the best selling PC games are *Deer Hunter*, *Deer Stalker* and *Barbie*. These are PC games sold to people who don't usually buy games. Intel will sell 100 million Pentium III chips this year and the best-selling PC title sells, what, maybe a couple of million? Someone, somewhere, is missing the point.

Do you think you're missing the point?
I don't know, maybe if you want to rake in money then a deer hunting game is the way to go.

What if you made a great looking 3D deer hunting game that used all the technologies we've been talking about? Could it be sold to the mass-market *and* to the games player?
Maybe it is as simple as that. Remember, though, that the most played PC game in the world isn't *Quake* or *Doom* or even *Deer Hunter*, it's *Patience*. People *are* willing to play games on their PC – just not the games we make.

You seem to have become a lone voice warning developers about the challenges and resources that they will have to meet in the future. But with virtually all UK publishers sold now, isn't it too late to save the British games industry?
No, I think we can get back up there. The great thing about computer games is that they are constantly evolving and that's what the British are great at doing.

This industry is young – in comparison to the film industry, we're still in the circus tent. Some people would say we're at the stage of going into colour but no, we're still showing a stupid moving picture of a rabbit jumping up and down and people are going "ooh" and "ah". There's a lot of innovation yet to come. PCG

INTO THE FUTURE

Taking others into orbit

Peter Molyneux is famous for building up Bullfrog Studios, selling them to Electronic Arts and then doing a runner.

He hasn't abandoned the idea of helping others make games, though. With co-founders Mark Webley and Steve Jackson he's set up Lionhead Satellites. This will see two or three independent developers receiving their technology and legal support. In return, Lionhead take a slice of the royalties.

"It's all very well for me to say the industry needs to do this and that or it's doomed, but not if I just sit on my arse," says Molyneux candidly. "The Satellites are doing something about it."

"We can take the *Black And White* engine and work on making our own additions, saving about a year of development time," explains Dean Carter of Big Blue Box, the first official Satellite.

His brother Simon says Big Blue Box aren't worried about being overshadowed by Lionhead either. "We are our own company, this isn't one of Peter's back-closet ideas," he says.

Big Blue Box are refusing to say anything about *Wishworld*, their debut title. But the founding members worked on *Theme Park* and *Dungeon Keeper* and with access to *Black And White's* fantastic engine, we expect something special.

NEXT MONTH

We'll be having a chinwag with Sid Meier about the forthcoming *Civilization III*.

PC GAMER'S Criminal

Coming to an Our Price near you soon (just as long as we can finalise our royalty percentage and get exclusive use of the record company's limo, that is).

Records

Thanks to a whole new range of software, making music on your PC has never been so easy. And as our budding pop stars (and most of the Top Forty) will tell you, you don't have to have a shred of musical talent!

It really is as easy as this...

Flat Eric. Cartoons. Aqua. Fatboy Slim. You could do that. And they all get paid LOADS. So what's your excuse? Why are you arsing about trying to finish the last mission in *X-Wing* when you could be composing your way to millions? What do you mean, you haven't got the equipment? That big beige box on your desk will do just fine.

It's true, people have been making music on computers for years; the only problem up to now has been the expense and complication of the programs involved. Computer music has been the preserve of people with plenty of money to spend, and the dedication to wade through some very thick manuals. And of course, you've needed a Big Computer and plenty of expensive sampling equipment to even get started.

Just recently, though, a new range of 'games' have appeared for the PC, most of them in the familiar sub-£50 price range. These games are unique because the object is not to destroy aliens, conquer worlds, or build entertainment complexes. The object is to compose music and many of them make it very easy indeed. With almost no practice at all you can start to turn out songs that almost, *almost* sound good enough to be played in your local club. If you've ever harboured pop star ambitions then this is exactly the sort of thing you should try. It makes air guitar completely redundant.

There are so many music programs floating around at the moment that we felt it was about time the PC GAMER collective tried their hand at composition. After all, a couple of hit singles would provide a welcome boost to the holiday fund, and Mark could buy a new T-shirt or two. After only a minor argument over who got what, we took one program each and began the journey into a pop music fantasy world. Within minutes we were immersed in the composition of our own personal Strawberry Fields, Oliver's Army, Barbie Girl, or whatever.

The artistic and emotional struggles that we endured composing our tunes are catalogued over the page. You can listen to the results for yourself on this month's CD. We've also offered our verdict on all the programs we tested and there's even the opportunity to win your very own music package to get you started. Turn over to find out more...

Testing, testing...

■ We reviewed five music packages altogether, most of which retail for less than £50 and run on all Pentium PCs equipped with a good sound card. Some will even struggle along on a 486, but you might find your progress frustratingly slow.

We used our office PCs to compose our tunes, but found no significant performance difference between Ross' P166 and James' PII 450. When it comes to speakers we recommend a sub-woofer and satellite system – turn to this issue's Money Pit on page 160 for more details. Normal stereo speakers will be fine of course, but unless you own a CD burner so that you can play your compositions on your stereo, you won't ever be able to rack up the volume to neighbour-annoying heights.

DANCE E-JAY 2

■ Publisher: **Fast Trak**
■ Released **Out now**
■ Price: **£30**
■ System Required: **P66, 16Mb RAM, 40Mb HD space, Windows 95/98/NT, x4 CD-ROM, 16bit sound card**
■ Contact: **01923 495496**
■ Web: **www.fasttrak.co.uk**

■ The Artist Known As: **bREMsTRAhLunG X JoNes**
■ The Artist Formerly Known As: **Kieron Gillen**
■ Track title: **God Gave Post-Rock and Roll to Us**

If you've read GAMER for a couple of issues you know that Ross owns half the planet, Mark's a Goth and Matt spends too much time chasing girls.

You may have also noticed that I'm the incredibly fey, obscure-record obsessive with an unhealthy love for all things tuneless and whiney. "I'll show you all," I thought while chewing my exclusive Belle and Sebastian scarf-woggle, "I'm going to create a banging choon for the junglistic massive. Or something." Enter stage left, *Dance e-Jay* claiming that I can "create my own club anthems in seconds". "Oh good. I can be home for lunch," I mumbled.

So I installed *Dance e-Jay*. Seconds passed. The promised club anthem didn't materialise. It looked like I'd actually have to do some work.

Except I didn't. Ten minutes later, and a Eurohouse song glided out of the speakers. All clichés unleashed: orgasmic female groanings; synth-breaks for E'd up Ibiza-kids to wave their hands in the air too; and, indeed, bits where a gentleman tells everyone to do the "Hands in the air" thing. I named it "This is Big Beat" because it quite plainly isn't.

Then every single vinyl-cell in my body rebelled against my work. I was consumed by a burning desire to create Ambient Post-Rock of such potency that a small but persistent goatee would instantly sprout from the chin of anyone exposed to it, while simultaneously making them go cue-ball bald.

So, dropping the tempo as low as I could, I got an armful of ambient whale-noises and threw them haphazardly on the floor. A subtle beat and "God Gave Post Rock And Roll To Us" is finished. I now realise that as well as being King Spy, I am King Ambient and the jeering from the rest of the office is merely the envy of lesser lights. They'll be sorry when I bar them from my after-Wembley show party and they can't snort ('*Sherbert*' - Ed) from supermodels' cleavages with me. Just you wait and see.

ON THE CD There's a demo of *Dance e-Jay 2* on this month's second CD along with Kieron's track

HIP HOP E-JAY

■ Publisher: **Fast Trak**
■ Released. **Out now**
■ Price: **£35**
■ System Required: **P66, Windows 95/98/NT, 16Mb RAM, x2 CD-ROM, 16bit sound card**
■ Contact. **01923 495496**
■ Web: **www.fasttrak.co.uk**

■ The Artist Known As: **MC Chafe, aka Docta Wealth, aka Johnny De'ath**
■ The Artist Formerly Known As: **Matthew Pierce**
■ Track title: **The 7 Circles Of Chafe**

PC GAMER Profile

Hip Hop e-jay is:
■ Incredibly easy to use
■ Packed with a good selection of loops and effects
■ Complete with a powerful scratching facility

Hip Hop e-jay is not:
■ Full of great rap samples. Most are naff
■ Easy when it comes to altering a track's tempo
■ Anything more than a gimmick when it comes to the turntable

Yo. Keep the flava real, man. Ya know what I'm saying?

Probably not – but half an hour with *Hip Hop e-Jay*, and you will. The phattest beats and illest rhymes can be yours – just like MC Chafe, the strongest, richest, baddest gangsta ass in South Central Bath.

We're talking about what's basically a dope version of *Dance e-Jay 2* (see Kieron's review) for wannabe MCs, but with the emphasis on nails drum and bass loops, rap samples instead of poncey, ravey 'Take Me Higher's', and a coupla virtual decks for your all-important scratches.

Being da dopest criminal, this was perfect for The Johnny De'ath, and within a couple of hours his first rap-sterpiece had been created – a low-fi dub joint codenamed The Seven Circles of Chafe.

Dropping some industrial, brooding effects together with a relentless filtered drumloop and heavy duty bass, the opening eight bars are hardcore Bristolian trip-hop rather than East Coast old skool.

If the start has you thinking, "This is wack. He don't know what time it is", the frenzy of scratching that follows (using the pre-set samples) should make you seriously chill. Twenty to six, it screams. Nearly time for the Docta to go home and get dinner.

If manual scratching's your bag, though, you can check ya talent using the seriously weird plastic 'turntable' and record. Just drag your mouse-ball back and forth over the wax, to create some bad sounds. Not much more than a toy, but big ill fun for junior MCs wanting to emulate the supreme De'ath. A couple of bass-heavy drop-outs thrown into the mix altered the pace of the track: keeping the brothers and sisters alert to the Dread's preaching, while the vocal itself was four snatches of the hardest sounding rhymes.

ON THE CD There's a demo of *Hip Hop e-Jay 2* on this month's second CD along with Matt's track.

HOW IT WORKS

In an identical way to *Dance e-Jay 2*, tunes are constructed by dragging and dropping colour-coded blocks onto any of the 16 sound channels. They can even be overlapped or doubled-up in order to add extra volume or to extend the sound. Pull any of the drum, bass, rap, or voice sounds onto the turntable icon, and you're taken to the studio. From here you can scratch them by moving the mouse backwards and forwards before importing your newly recorded sound file into your own track. As good as it is though, it's not nearly as powerful as the dance version's sampler.

PC GAMER A very simple, yet powerful package for wannabe rappers. The perfect introduction to making music on your PC, as long as you're a hip-hop fan. **85%**

PC GAMER Profile

- The simplest package to use
- Complete with a powerful drum machine for making your own beats
- So flexible you can quickly add special effects to samples

Dance e-Jay's not

- Unlimited; the supply of samples is quickly exhausted. Get more from the Net
- The place to be if you're into non-house music
- Big on quality raps and vocals. They're embarrassing

HOW IT WORKS

The fact that I managed to get a workable tune within minutes says a lot for *e-Jay*'s accessibility. Essentially, it's Lego. All the samples and sounds are represented by coloured blocks whose size matches the length of time they play for. You just drag them onto one of the 16 sound channels, and arrange to your satisfaction. And that, bar the luxury extras, is it. You can import your own samples or download them off the Net, plus there's a passable drum machine for making new beats and a simple sample-manipulator for making them sound spooky.

PC GAMER 87%

It's the package in the office that's gained most play, being accessible enough for everyone to use and powerful enough for everyone to *want* to.

DANCE MAKER

- Publisher: **Magix**
- Released: **Out now**
- Price: **£35**
- System Required: **P60, 16Mb RAM, 30Mb HD space, Windows 95/98/NT, 2x CD-ROM, 16-bit sound card**
- Contact: **0181 9683666**
- Web: **www.magix.net**

- The Artist Known As: **Groove Champion**
- The Artist Formerly Known As: **Ross Atherton**
- Track title: **The Psychedelic Moog Textural Experiment**

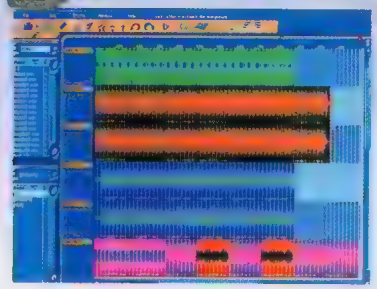
Having been given this opportunity to bring my music to the masses, I immediately knew it would take a very special program to fit the bill. For my music's message to travel directly to the listener's happy glands, it must not be hindered or filtered – after all, my central communique is one of purity.

The Psychedelic Moog Textural Experiment was intended as a study of form, shape and layering. My intention was to move the listener, through the medium of dance music, to a higher plane of consciousness where one can commune freely with the soul. (*You aren't fooling anyone here* – Ed) However, *Dance Maker* immediately confines the artist with its arbitrary definitions. The adequate range of samples (around 1,000) are listed under such redundant terms as 'Speed Garage' and 'Techno'. Such prehistoric limitations!

My intention was to use sound samples which accurately represent human emotions. However, *Dance Maker*'s collection of samples hindered me: quite why they used a tone-deaf gibbon with a dictaphone to record the vocal samples is beyond me. The range of drum and organ loops are much better, though; the latter featuring heavily in the Psychedelic Moog Textural Experiment. But *Dance Maker*'s real strength is its extensive range of add-on packs, which allow the budding musician to access a truly massive range of sounds. Except me, as I didn't have them, and purchasing all 12 goes against my strict Buddhist principles.

I was also slightly disappointed by the sound quality following the mix-down to .wav file format. When nicely spread out across the program's 16 tracks, the melody's high frequency distortion sounded deliberate (it was, of course). After the mix-down, however, the sound accuracy was compromised, and so was my credibility as a sonic-sculptor.

ON THE CD Hear the Psychedelic Moog Textural Experiment in all its glory on this month's second CD.



PC GAMER Profile

Dance Maker

- Capable of synching video tracks to your music
- Able to use add-on discs to increase your repertoire
- Powerful, with up to 16 tracks per song

Dance Maker's not

- Quick to offer good results
- Replete with loads of effects
- Full of great samples

HOW IT WORKS

Despite *Dance Maker*'s slightly clumsy interface I was able to knock together a meaningful composition within an hour or so. While the end results of these effects are pleasing, they are ultimately limited. For example, volume, distortion, reverb, etc. should have percentage controls rather than a basic doubling or halving switch. Who can tell how the Psychedelic Textural Moog Experiment might have turned out if *Dance Maker* had permitted me to express myself unreservedly?

PC GAMER 68%

A rather patchy affair, with some great features ultimately let down by lots of little annoying parts. A bit like the Seventies, really.

MAKING WAVES

- Publisher: **Orion**
- Released: **Out now**
- Price: **£40**
- System Required: **486 DX/2 66, 8Mb RAM, sound card**
- Contact: **01773 821120**
- Web: **www.pslnet.demon.co.uk/gra-index.htm**

- The Artist Known As: **Spitfire Jack**
- The Artist Formerly Known As: **James Ashton**
- Track title: **Composition in Vanilli No. 3**

PC GAMER Profile

Making Waves is
- The nearest you'll get to the real thing for the money
- Far more adaptable than its rivals
- Under-endowed with its own samples

Making Waves is not
- As limiting as other packages
- Particularly accessible
- Easy

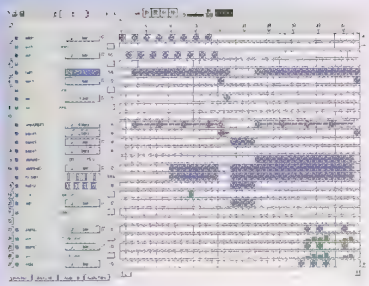
Possessing what can only be described as a total lack of musical ability, the brief to produce a listenable tune in the space of an afternoon was the sort of challenge I would have been happy to avoid. And in a quirk of GAMER's elaborate first-come, first-served software distribution process, I ended up with one of the most complicated packages on test.

Making Waves, you see, is not the ideal piece of software for tone-deaf musical idiots like myself, and for quite a while I was struggling. Designed primarily as a tool to make your own music with, it's a lot more complicated than the bolt-and-build construction kits that I jealously watched Kieron and Matt tinker with. The samples included are fairly limited – the idea is that you record your own - but the range and scope of the effects you can thrust upon them is legion – I didn't get anywhere near exploring or even understanding half of them.

The best way to describe *Making Waves* is a stepping stone between the 'fun' packages elsewhere on these pages, and the top end professional studio programs such as *Q-Base*. Pleasingly, you don't seem as tied to the cheesy dance/house nonsense that most of the other packages railroad you into. Of course, it would take a lot of time, commitment and talent to get Dubnobass out of it, which probably explains the over-ripe cheddar that is Composition in Vanilli #3.

If you're seriously interested in getting into computer music, you'll probably get more out of this than any of the other entry

ON THE CD Ahem, you can enjoy Composition in Vanilli 3 on this month's second CD.



level software. It has some annoying quirks and, overall, putting together a respectable tune is really hard work; but the scope for experimentation is huge.

HOW IT WORKS

Creating drum loops proved to be the first hurdle; with few included on the disc it was a case of slowly building up loops from constituent drum sounds. There is less drag and drop here than in other programs, with a far larger number of possible tracks allowing a subtler and hence more powerful point and click, beat by-beat, bar-by-bar system.

PC GAMER The widest musical scope on offer but far more complicated as a result. If you already know music, this is probably your best bet. **80%**

ACID MUSIC

- Publisher: **Sonic Foundry**
- Released: **Out now**
- Price: **£60**
- System Required: **P133, 32Mb RAM, 5Mb HD space, Windows 95/98/NT, x2 CD-ROM, 16-bit sound card**
- Contact: **(US) 608 256 5555**
- Web: **www.sonicfoundry.com**

- The Artist Known As: **Doktor Diktat and his Workers' Party**
- The Artist Formerly Known As: **Mark Donald**
- Track title: **Das Bonnet**

PC GAMER Profile

Acid Music is:
- Easy to get started with
- Chocka with samples
- Loads of fun

Acid Music is not
- The cheapest
- Very clear once things get complicated
- Limited to acid music

You are now entering Doktor Diktat's Electronic Embassy. This is a Zero Tolerance Zone. Here the relentless tirade of the Machine Manifesto crushes the individual, rationalising the human resource for the victory of the industrial. It is so. Doktor Diktat has willed it.

The tool of triumph is Acid Music, an advanced technological process that enables Doktor Diktat to broadcast his message from his Kosmo-Kinetic Kabinet. Or PC.

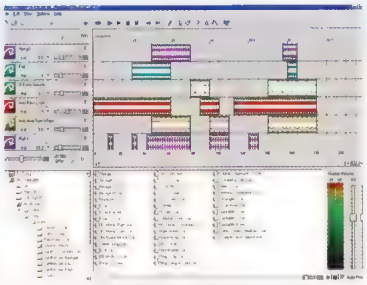
Within moments of their first encounter, Doktor Diktat had bent *Acid Music* to his formidable will, there beginning his glorious struggle to bring trauma therapy to the people. Doktor Diktat's righteous fight soon turned into open rout as *Acid Music*'s man-machine interface rapidly unleashed an irresistible force of loops, effects and sonic solutions. With such power at Doktor Diktat's disposal, nothing could stop the launch of 'Das Bonnet', the first stage in the ascendance of his Infernal Industrial. Infernal Industrial is the force by which the machine spirit will destroy the kingdom of deviance using the power of bleeps.

$I = np^2$

Where
I = Infernal Industrial, n = noise, p = pain

Understand that Infernal Industrial will brook no argument and tolerate no opposition. Doktor Diktat will rule, it is destiny. Resistance is useless, rant, fume, spin round in circles, can't climb the stairs, I'm the operator of a desk-top calculator... Aaaaargh! Thud (Dies).

ON THE CD Bludgeon your senses with Das Bonnet on the second of this month's CDs.



HOW IT WORKS

Christ. Thank god he's gone. Like all the most accessible packages here, *Acid Music* uses the intuitive drag 'n' drop system, allowing you to pick samples and paint them into your track list as coloured blocks. Unlike the other packages, you can play new loops along with your existing track without pasting them in. This makes building compositions on the fly incredibly easy: 'Das Bonnet' was composed within 20 minutes. No, really.

Strangely, *Acid Music* doesn't just deal in acid. Within its abundant folders you'll also find a supply of (royalty-free) loops for rock, country, funk, brass and the many shades of electronic. You want the power chord pomposity of Spinal Tap? Doubtless you can dredge it up from here somewhere.

PC GAMER Vies with *Dance e-Jay* for the coveted title of top music package. *Acid* caters for more musical tastes, but is slightly harder to use. **86%**

PC GAMER'S Singles of the Week

So then, how do our efforts compare to the real thing? **We ask a professional's opinion**

'SEVEN CIRCLES OF CHAFE'
MC Chafe aka Docta Wealth aka Johnny De'Ath aka The Dread Richini

It begins with an industrial bass rumble that threatens to consign your woofers to the great Richer Sounds in the sky. It ends in a Wu-flavoured barrage of millennial paranoia and sonic conspiracy. In between? In between is an actually pretty f**king fly wedge of down tempo, Gravediggaz-esque hip-hop that could easily trounce most of the offal currently disguising itself as Brit Rap. According to the Chafester, he is "coming to your earth to spread the hip-hop". If it sounds like this, then it's time to start making mountains out of mashed potato.

Score: 8/10
Try If You Like: DJ Shadow, Wu-Tang Clan, being very scared

'THIS IS BIG BEAT'
bREMsTRAhLunG JoNes

Ignore that title. Rather than the hegemony of 78RPM house beats and Norman 'F**king' Cook's baldy head, 'This Is Big Beat' is a confused techno mishmash of late Eighties hip-house and some decidedly post-Orb Ibiza witterings. A shame given the opening dalek noises and tinnitus drum loop but when a big MC type declares he wants to "see your hands in the air", the only rational reply is to tell him to piss right off. Think Odyssey, think fake fur bustiers, think dodgy Escorts with amusing number plates. 'This is Big Beat'? This is Technotronic more like...

Score: 4/10
Try If You Like: Rebel MC, early Fatboy Slim, expensive water

'GOD GAVE POST ROCK AND ROLL TO US'
bREMsTRAhLunG JoNes

This is more like it – the boy bREMsTRAhLunG obviously on more comfortable terms with the post-Kraftwerk school of analogue pulsings and computer love. Vinyl trainspotters will notice similarities to the likes of Kriedler and To Rococco Rot while compu-nerds will dig the mutated techno that wouldn't sound amiss on Channel Four's NASA-and-Rizla mongathon, 'The Trip'. Fancy a 4am cruise down the autobahn between Dusseldorf and Munich? Let bREMsTRAhLunG be your guide.

Score: 7/10
Try If You Like: Tortoise, Neu!, kissing robots

'THE PSYCHEDELIC MOOG TEXTURAL EXPERIMENT'
Groove Champion

Groove Champion obviously shares a funny cigarette with young bREMsTRAhLunG, for both enjoy the less robotic side of the beast they call techno. More deep house in origins than Teutonic robo-funk, 'The Psychedelic Moog Textual Experiment' is aimed at the nation's more chilled dancefloors with its gentle pulse, swirling hooks and genuinely classy delivery. Again, maybe a tad confused as to what it is and with a disappointing end fade, nonetheless 'The Psychedelic Moog Textual Experiment' is a stylish techno wash to keep reformed thirty-something gurners more than happy.

Score: 7/10
Try If You Like: Derrick May, Juan Atkins, expensive shirts

'COMPOSITION IN VANILLI NO. 3'
Spitfire Jack

Spitfire Jack take it back to the old school with this elektro-tinged slice of 303 squelchiness. Robo-sheep bleat 'baaa' in a few different tones, drums machines throw down a lino backbeat and there's plenty of bloops and bleeps to keep the James Lavelle wannabes happy. Again, the tune ends with a naff fade-out and it could do with a deeper bassline but for those Hoxton Square trendies who dug last year's 'Nu School Breakz' LP, Spitfire Jack has his targets locked on you.

Score: 6/10
Try If You Like: Dave Tipper, Arthur Baker, expensive tracksuits

'DAS BONNET'
Doktor Diktat and his Workers' Party

The Good Doktor's been strolling through Germany in the company of Mr BREMsTRAhLunG, but, rather than streaming blissfully down the Eternal Autobahn, he's sidled into the nearest pre-war cellar and co-opted his workers into the Apocalypse Party. Anyone on Digital Hardcore would certainly approve. A porno-filthy synth-squelch leads to a distorted lebensraum-hungry battlecry before descending into the customary bass-industrial siren-dripping frenzy. Drops into dub-space permit a little light between the clouds as momentary relief, but this is terminally evil. I need a shower.

Score: 7/10
Try If You Like: The Young Gods, Mid-period Ministry, watching mushroom clouds on the horizon.

JUKE BOX JURY

Here is the verdict of the PC GAMER jury

Dance E-Jay 2 Contact: Fast Trak 01923 495496	87%
Acid Music Contact: Sonic Foundry (US) 608 2565555	86%
Hip Hop E-Jay Contact: Fast Trak 01923 495496	85%
Wave Maker Contact: Orion 01773 821120	80%
Dance Maker Contact: Magix 0181 9683666	68%

And don't forget to tune into DJ Trevski's essential selection of our works on CD GAMER, whenever you can gather the physical strength necessary. Remember you heard it here first. And last.

'Now that's what I call a competition'

Hi, pop pickers. The groovy guys and gals at Fast Trak have agreed to give away five copies of *Dance e-Jay 2* and *Hip Hop e-Jay* to the first ten readers to answer the following question correctly.

Which member of the PCG team used to stalk Sarah Ferguson on a professional basis?

It's not musical, but then neither are most of the team. Send your entries to The 'Now that's what I call a competition' competition, PC GAMER, 29 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW. And don't forget to say which package you prefer. The answer and winners will be printed in PCG 71.

Seriously interested in PC Music?

The packages on test here are great for instant music making, but represent just a fraction of what's out there for the PC musician. If you want to know more about how to expand your PC's musical potential, check out our sister magazine Computer Music which reviews all the latest music software and sound cards and usually gives away a full PC music package every month.

INTO THE MEAN STREETS OF ANKH-MORPORK ONE MAN MUST GO...

The name's Lewton. I'm a private investigator. I don't know where the idea came from, I was just thinking one night that it would be damn fine to have an office with my name on the door and a sturdy desk for sexy broads to lean across. Trouble is, wherever there are sexy broads there's trouble, and the dame I'm working for wrote the book on trouble, and the sequel too. Her name's Carlotta, and between her, the psychotic dwarf who's following me and this walking mountain with the brain of a pomegranate who calls himself Malachite, I'm beginning to wonder if the Discworld's first private investigator might be about to become the Discworld's last private investigator too.

PC CD ROM

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DISCWORLD® NOIR

WHERE DEATH STANDS ON EVERY CORNER, ASKING FOR DIRECTIONS

PERFECT ENTERTAINMENT

PC GAMER

REVIEWS

In which we put every new game in front of our panel of experts.

HOW OUR REVIEWS WORK

1. We only review finished games. Our preference is for boxed copies, but on occasion we are forced to review from pre-production gold master discs. In this latter case, we will only review games that have been signed off as finished by their publisher.

2. We play every game for at least two or three days before starting to write. If we think a game might be worthy of 85% or more, then we will endeavour to finish it before writing our review.

3. We match games to reviewers very carefully. Only a real-time strategy expert will review a real-time strategy game, for example, and only those with a passion for first-person shooters will get their hands on the next instalment of *Quake* or the next *Half-Life*. When you read a PC GAMER review you can be certain that the writer is an expert in his field and has plenty of enthusiasm for the type of game he's writing about.

4. The scores we award games are based on the PC GAMER scoring system (above-right) and no other. You can trust that the scores we give will accurately reflect this system. If a game earns the Game of Distinction or Game of the Month awards, you can be certain it will make an excellent purchase.

5. We review every game according to its merits. If it's a multi-player-only wargame, and won't work with anything less than a Voodoo3, then we'll judge its performance on that criteria. However, our reviews will also give you plenty of warning if a game has any special requirements and will also give you a good idea of how well a game will perform on your PC. Our benchmark PC is a PII 350, 64Mb RAM, with a Voodoo2 graphics accelerator card. However, after initial play-testing, we will then play the game on or near the minimum specification machine stated by the game's publisher and judge how well it performs. We will also test the machine on a more 'average' PC and report its performance on that. See the System Miser box to the right.

6. Our reviewers are real gamers who write with other gamers in mind. Our sole aim is to tell you whether or not a game is worth playing, and no amount of coercion or pressure from anyone will prevent us giving you the honest truth.

RIGHT TO REPLY

Think we've treated a game unfairly? Over-rated something you found a bit average? Address your redress to pcgamer@futurenet.co.uk or write to James Ashton, Cables, PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW. Or see the forthcoming reader reviews section next month.

THE PC GAMER SCORING SYSTEM

These are the only criteria by which PC GAMER awards its scores.

0–10%
Not just bad, games in this category simply fail to work in an acceptable way. Games that score this low are either unplayable or lack enough content to actually qualify as a 'game'. If you see them, alert the authorities.
RECENT EXAMPLES
South Park PCG 69
Ed Hunter PCG 71

11–29%
It's not just that the game is badly executed, it's more that the whole concept was never a very good idea in the first place. There is at least a game here but it's ill-conceived and shoddily produced. Avoid at all costs.
RECENT EXAMPLES
Eliminator PCG 68
Rage Of Mages PCG 65

30–49%
There's probably the germ of a good idea in here somewhere, but lots of things have gone badly wrong along the way. Not unplayably bad, but obvious and significant flaws seriously reduce the possibility of sustained fun
RECENT EXAMPLES
Adrenix PCG 62
Deo Gratias PCG 60

50–69%
A score for games that suffer no major problems but somehow fail to be more than the sum of their parts. A few niggles may annoy, but big fans of the genre in question will get some entertainment here. The less committed won't be so interested.
RECENT EXAMPLES
Sanitarium PCG 67
Expendable PCG 70

70–85%
Any game that scores more than 70% in PC GAMER will be capable of entertaining almost anyone that picks it up and is a title that no-one should be embarrassed to own. These games lack the individual spark of greatness but they're lots of fun all the same.
RECENT EXAMPLES
Need For Speed III PCG 63
Rival Realms PCG 65

85% +
Games that score more than 85% can be unequivocally recommended and as a result, earn themselves our Game of Distinction award. Only games that actually redefine what can be expected from the genre in future will score 90% or more.
RECENT EXAMPLES
Half-Life PCG 63
Jimmy White's 2: Cueball PCG 61

THE PC GAMER GAME OF DISTINCTION AWARD

The Game of Distinction Award is given to any game that scores 85% or more. When you see this award you can guarantee that the game in question is a true classic and well worth your money. We think hard before giving the award, usually playing the game in question right to the end before making our final judgement. This way we can be sure that it remains top-notch all the way through.

THE PC GAMER GAME OF THE MONTH AWARD

The Game of the Month award is our ultimate accolade. If you can only buy one game this month then it should be the one emblazoned with this badge. This game is one of the all-time greats, and should appeal to everyone right across the board. We don't give out this award automatically. If, in a month, there aren't any games that measure up to those standards, then we won't make the award.

SYSTEM MISER

All games are first played under the best possible conditions on our benchmark review PCs, which are PII 350s with 64Mb RAM and a Voodoo2 card. But you need to know if a game works on your PC at home. So, providing we think a game is good enough to score 80% or more, we test it on some more 'real life' machines to see how it performs with less processor power at its disposal.

Our aim is to try to give you a good idea of how well the game will play (and what it will look like) on your PC, as well as testing the reliability of the minimum specification stated by the game's publisher. After that, we'll take a more middle of the road set-up and examine how the game performs on that. Then we report our findings in the 'System Miser' box accompanying every game that scores over 80%.

SYSTEM MISER – An example

How *Generic Shooter 3* will play on *your* PC.

■ Test System **P166, 32Mb RAM, no 3D card installed**

VERDICT: How well does the game run at minimum spec? We'll tell you right here and include the screen resolution above.

■ Test System **P266, 32Mb RAM, Voodoo1 (4Mb)**

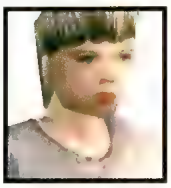
VERDICT: How well does the game run on medium spec machines? Find out here, again with the resolution above.

THE PC GAMER REVIEWERS

Our reviewers are experts in their field with many years of gaming experience behind them. They are hand-picked for their ability to play games, accurately evaluate them and write their findings in a concise and entertaining way.

JAMES ASHTON
Specialist in: Driving, action, football, platformers
Current favourite game: Midtown Madness
This month: Suffering jet lag, James fell asleep at his desk. No one noticed

JES BICKHAM
Specialist in: 3D shooters, action adventure
Current favourite game: *Midtown Madness*
This month: Jes returned to his NATO-era Queen roots. Crazy little thing.



OWAIN BENNALLACK
Specialist in: Strategy, RPG, adventure
Current favourite game: *Civ: Call to Power*
This month: Left for the the US to research a PCG Scoop. Still Welsh

JONATHAN DAVIES
Specialist in: Lego, fishing, driving, action
Current favourite game: *Official Formula 1 Racing*
This month: A top go karter, JD claims that life in London is 'OK'

KIERON GILLEN
Specialist in: Action strategy, everything, really
Current favourite game: *Hidden And Dangerous*
This month: A suspiciously good popstar act hints that KG may have a secret life

MARK DONALD
Specialist in: Strategy, action, 3D shooters
Current favourite game: *Midtown Madness*
This month: Held the fort admirably while E3 ran its course. Still no haircut

MATTHEW PIERCE
Specialist in: 3D shooters, driving, sports
Current favourite game: *Quake III Test*
This month: Failed to disgrace himself in any way. Unusually

There is a tremor in the Force...

The Phantom Menace fails to live up to the hype, while *Hidden And Dangerous* achieves the exact opposite.

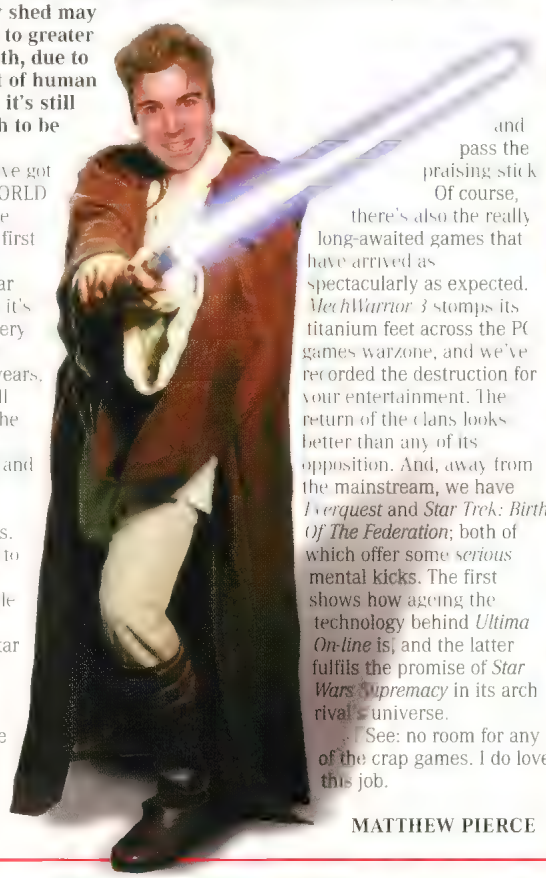
Great games out of nowhere. Great games from somewhere. Just great games. Sometimes I fall to my hands and knees to kiss the office's carpet. Why? Because it's great to be here. While my love of the tiny shed may have been kindled to greater intensity this month, due to my week in the pit of human despair that is LA, it's still been a great month to be part of GAMER.

For a start, we've got the (deep breath) WORLD EXCLUSIVE (breathe again) review of the first game based on The Phantom Menace Star Wars prequel. While it's not quite up to the very best LucasArts have produced in recent years, it still managed to fill our chambers with the authentic sound of lightsabres clashing and almost-amusing dialogue from the freakish Jar-Jar Binks. Though, now I come to think of it, we could have done with a little less of the latter.

If part of the Star Wars hysteria is based on long savoured nostalgic memories, we can be sure that in 20 years' time there'll be a planet-wide revival of this month's highest scorers, *Hidden And Dangerous* and *Midtown Madness*. Both have barely received enough hype to cover a pygmy's private quarters. Yet both have completely and utterly consumed the gaming life of everyone in the office with their originality and sheer unadulterated fun. Skip to the reviews and pass the praising stick. Of course, there's also the really long-awaited games that have arrived as spectacularly as expected. *MechWarrior 3* stomps its titanium feet across the PC games warzone, and we've recorded the destruction for your entertainment. The return of the clans looks better than any of its opposition. And, away from the mainstream, we have *Everquest* and *Star Trek: Birth Of The Federation*; both of which offer some *serious* mental kicks. The first shows how ageing the technology behind *Ultima On-line* is, and the latter fulfils the promise of *Star Wars: Supremacy* in its arch rival's universe.

See: no room for any of the crap games. I do love this job.

MATTHEW PIERCE



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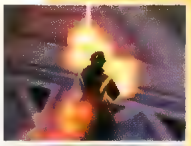

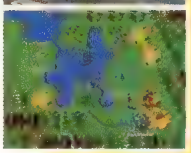

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REVIEWS DATABASE

Don't forget, there's a complete archive of every single PC GAMER review, dating all the way back to issue 1. You'll find it on CD GAMER disc 2, fully updated each month. If you like the look of an older game, or want to swap some titles with friends, insert your CD to find out all about it and what we thought of it when it was first released.

ROSS ATHERTON
Specialist in: RPGs, sports adventure, strategy
Current favourite game: *Baldur's Gate*
This month: Has cricket on the brain. And on his

STEVE OWEN
Specialist in: Driving, strategy, simulation, action
Current favourite game: *Civ: Call to Power*
This month: Went to US in shorts. Not been seen

JONATHAN NASH
Specialist in: Arcade, adventure, novelties
Current favourite game: *Midtown Madness*
This month: Discovered the *Midtown Madness* phenomenon. Praise him

JAMES FLYNN
Specialist in: Strategy, driving, adventure
Current favourite game: *X Wing Alliance*
This month: Went tips-crazy for GAMER. Suitcase still in the hall

RICHARD LONGHURST
Specialist in: Hatchet jobs
Current favourite game: *Hidden And Dangerous*
This month: GAMER's hit man shredded *Ed Hunter*. Quite right, too

DEAN EVANS
Specialist in: Flying and military simulations
Current favourite game: *Falcon 4.0*
This month: Considered buying an RAF surplus Hawk. Almost did, too

JASON WESTON
Specialist in: Hardcore wargames, strategy, RPG
Current favourite game: *Operational Art Of War*
This month: Read several large manuals thoroughly. No change there, then

GENRE: ACTION/STRATEGY

STAR WARS: EPISODE 1- THE PHANTOM MENACE

"Try not. Do. Or do not. There is no try." Perhaps LucasArts should have listened to Yoda.

OFFERING A NEW HOPE

The release of Episode I marks not only the beginning of a new film trilogy, but the end of a gaming era. The general consensus of opinion is that 'classic' Star Wars (i.e. Episodes IV, V and VI) will never be revisited by LucasArts, and all future games will focus on the new trilogy. *Force Commander* was delayed for just such a reason – featuring, as it did, units and characters from Episode I, while the next big release will be *Episode I: Obi Wan*, effectively *Dark Forces III*. (See page 21 for more details).

The game's opening level is actually the prettiest of the lot, although not much of a challenge.

LUCAS Arts' Star Wars games are historically hit and miss affairs. The *X-Wing* series, excellent. *Yoda Stories*, pitiful. *Jedi Knight*, superb. *Shadows Of The Empire*, feeble.

Following this trend, *The Phantom Menace* should, by rights, be a stinker, (it's come just after the excellent *X Wing Alliance*). And while it's not complete Bantha dung, the fact that it's not hugely impressive reveals both the problems LucasArts have had in presenting the increasingly complex Star Wars universe, as well as a game struggling against its own restrictive story line

The Phantom Menace is, of course, the game of the film So much so that almost every event that you'll witness on the big screen is represented here. But if you've already read the novel or screenplay (or been lucky enough to catch the film in the States), you'll realise that a significant

"A pleasant stroll through Kew Gardens."

proportion of the action takes place on the planet of Naboo. Home to the Queen's city of Theed, this is an undeniably gorgeous place to wander around, with ornamental gardens, waterfalls and swamps teeming with wildlife but as the basis for an action/adventure game it lacks the necessary atmosphere. Gone are the imaginatively textured spacecraft interiors and dimly lit alien palaces of the later Episodes, and in come hundreds of flat-roofed houses, tranquil ponds, and mazes of transparent underwater corridors. Much of the time, playing *The Phantom Menace* feels more like a pleasant stroll through Kew Gardens than a bloody battle against the evil Federation

Plus, unlike *Jedi Knight*, which afforded you the freedom and intuitive control system to take part in huge scale battles, *The Phantom Menace* is initially a very clumsy game to play. Viewed from an elevated third-person perspective, you're only ever in control of one character from a group of four (a choice which changes periodically depending on the level). The rotate/walk combination as used in *Tomb Raider* et al is the system of choice, with the

Obi-Wan chats to one of the many Federation Droids found around the levels.

The number of enemies in the game becomes overwhelming.

Forced

possibility of using the mouse for a more *Quake* inspired experience. Yet strafe controls are unforgivably absent in favour of some lame sideways rolls – a move that demands you press yet another key to perform them. After fully configuring your keys or gamepad, the subsequent finger wrestling combined with your inevitable huffing and puffing means that playing *The Phantom Menace* becomes akin to (and just as demanding as) learning to play the accordion. To grade eight standard

LIGHTWEIGHT SABRE

The game begins with you controlling Obi-Wan Kenobi and aided by the Liam Neeson character, Qui Gon Jinn. Initially equipped with only a lightsabre, it soon becomes clear that little real skill is involved in wielding your blade. It's crushingly disappointing to find that simply waving it about to deflect laser blasts, and running up to your quarry and slashing them repeatedly is about as complex as combat gets.

That sounds a little simplistic, but in reality, sabre moves are restricted to defensive (back off while slashing) or offensive (walk forward while slashing) Tapping then holding the fire key produces a spinning sabre attack, and jumping while firing produces an airborne manoeuvre, yet under the pressure of a group of shielded Destroyer Droids, combat is reduced to a combination of desperate slashes and cowardly retreats punctuated by judicious use of the sideways roll

Indeed, the game's difficulty (and it *is* hard) rests mainly on the illogical nature of the puzzles (See 'The four hour switch puzzle'), the confusing structure and

EWAN WHO'S ARMY?

Almost the entire cast of The Phantom Menace appear in the game. You're able to play as Obi-Wan, Qui-Gon, the Queen and Captain Panaka – and no, you can't kill the highly annoying Jar Jar Binks, before you ask.

OBI-WAN KENOBI

You control the young maverick Jedi in Levels 1 to 5. Your lightsabre's your best friend – able to deflect lasers as well as dishing out plenty of close-quarter action.

QUI-GON JINN

The older, wiser Jedi appears in Level 6, and like Obi-Wan, has the ability to perform acrobatic double-jumps. Traditional weapons such as the blaster aren't initially available to Qui-Gon.

QUEEN AMIDALA

The Queen requires your assistance early on, before you get the chance to take control of her. She's as rude to Obi-Wan as Leia was to Han – feisty, capable, and a royal too.

CAPTAIN PANAKA

The Captain's a blaster man through and through. He shuns the Jedi's sabre in favour of a firefight, and provides some of the most action-oriented levels in the game.

JAR JAR BINKS

The notoriously unfunny Gungan leads you a merry dance in the second swamp level – forever taunting you and egging you on in spite of serious Battle Droid resistance.

BATTLE DROID

The Episode I Stormtroopers appear in huge numbers throughout the game. They usually rely on Blasters, although they can also take command of deadly gun emplacements.

DARTH MAUL

More Dearth than Darth thanks to his rare appearances, Maul is the bad-ass villain par excellence, and deserves a bigger part than he gets: once on Tatooine and in the final battle.

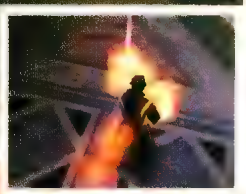
ANAKIN SKYWALKER

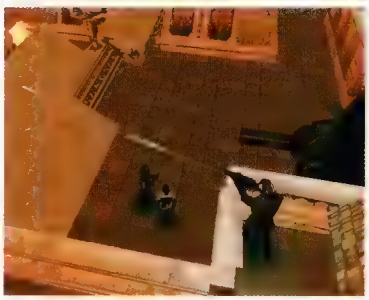
The boy Skywalker's found in Mos Espa, and wins the Pod Race (natch) to follow you around on your travels. Distinctly precocious, but less irritating than you'd expect.

THE FOUR-HOUR SWITCH PUZZLE

So-called because this alleged 'puzzle's' logic threatens to waste more of your life than a hundred fags and a pint of scotch. Taking place in Theed at the end of Level 5, you happen across a pair of locked gates guarded by a Battle Tank and two switches. A helpful guide on the wall illustrates that the switches open the gates, yet pressing the first switch with your 'activate' key achieves nothing. Nor does slashing it with your sabre, or shooting it with blasters or missile launchers. No, the only way to activate the switch is to... throw a flash grenade at it. Rubbish.

The Naboo hangar, hideout to the Queen's bodyguards.





Occasionally the cut-scenes use the game engine rather than FMV.

ROLL-Y WAN KENOBI

The lack of a strafe feature means fighting can be a problem when large numbers of Battle Droids are involved. By far the best way to pick enemies off without taking damage is to find a safe corner to hide behind, use the sideways roll to spin out into the open and fire, before rolling back into (relative) safety. A cowardly approach, but thanks to the clunky control system, it's the most effective approach available.

⇨ architecture of levels, and your own AI-controlled colleagues' tendency to indulge in blatantly suicidal behaviour. That the second of these criticisms is so severe is testament to the fact that the height of buildings in *The Phantom Menace* bears no relation to whether you can actually scale them or not

Seemingly accessible roofs and pillars regularly prevent you reaching them thanks to an invisible 'shield' surrounding them, while enormous distances that you'd never think of attempting to jump are often the real way forward Add to this the sprawling nature of many of the environments (especially Mos Espa), and the frustration is compounded beyond any reasonable levels of hair tearing, teeth-grinding madness.

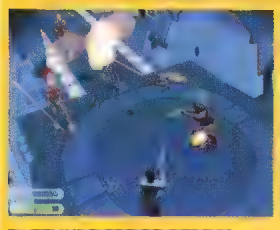
In comparison, the intelligence that both your foes and allies demonstrate seems positively advanced. It's not, of course; the missions that demand you protect certain members of your party are rendered even more difficult thanks to their inability to avoid danger. Traditionally (and you can cite examples as early as *Highway Encounter* on the Speccy, or as recent as the N64's *GoldenEye*) games with protection missions allow you to clear a safe path before guiding the person in your care along Not so in *The Phantom Menace*, where moving too far ahead of the Queen in Level 5 results in a "The Queen has died. Game over" message, whether there are any enemies near her or not. Consequently, protection missions involve asking your partner to follow you, and impotently watching as they run towards danger, get shot repeatedly in the face, and make no attempt to escape. It's an incredibly frustrating problem that's only amplified by the sometimes unnecessary dialogue intrusions. Example: you've escorted the Queen all the way to her ship's hangar and you've cleared the area of Battle Droids, yet she refuses to follow you through the door. Why? Because you must go through even more dialogue trees, instructing her to follow you along the clearly safe 50 yards to the exit.

ALIEN NATION

The enemies themselves are legion, although without much variety. The first six levels are populated almost entirely by Battle Droids (the new, but actually less intimidating versions of Stormtroopers). These robots patrol the levels mainly in groups, and although they only take a couple of hits to destroy, they're extremely quick on the draw. Meeting a group therefore elicits a hail of blaster fire - most of it accurate – from which the sideways roll and somersault jump are the only effective means of avoidance. Other NPCs pop up from time to time, such as the 'endearingly' clumsy (and impossibly irritating) Gungan, Jar Jar Binks and the ruler of the underwater city of Otoh Gunga, Boss Nass. However, it's not until Level 8 that the diversity of Lucas' alien creations is allowed to reveal itself The

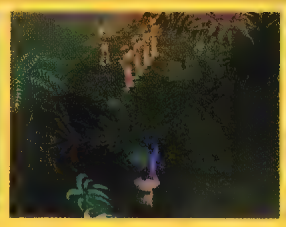
"Desperate slashes and cowardly retreats."

THE LEVELS



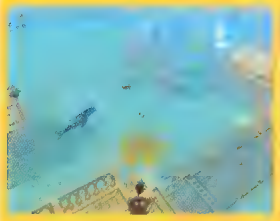
1. TRADE FEDERATION BATTLE SHIP
Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon must escape from the prison. They soon get split up, and Obi-Wan has to go it alone...

2. NABOO
As Obi-Wan it's up to you to explore the city grounds in order to find Queen Amidala. From there, it's off to Jar Jar's home.



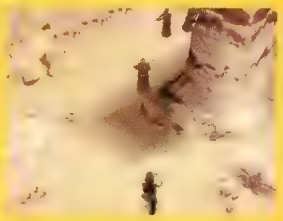
3. NABOO SWAMP
Like Dagobah, Naboo's swamps are overrun with exotic creatures, as well as Federation Droids. Find Jar Jar, and let him lead the way out.

4. OTOH GUNGA
Home of Boss Nass, and Jar Jar's prison, it's important not to harm the Gungans while tracking your clumsy friend down.



5. THEED PALACE GARDEN
The gardens are full of Battle and Destroyer Droids. You must find a path into the palace in this level that's chock full of puzzles.

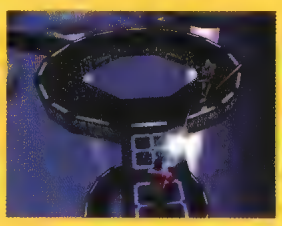
6. THEED CITY
With the Queen found, it's Obi-Wan's task to escort her to safety. Not easy, bearing in mind both the Federation resistance, and her suicidal AI.



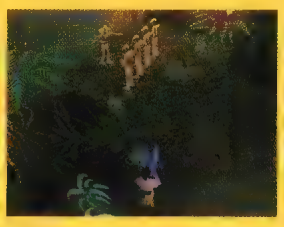
7. TATOOINE
An extremely short level in which you, as Qui-Gon, battle Tusken Raiders on your way to the city of Mos Espa.

8. MOS ESPA
The bustling city is home to Anakin and his master in slavery, Watto. Find both, and gain a hyperdrive unit while playing as Qui-Gon.

9. MOS ESPA ARENA
With Anakin racing in his Pod, it's important to find a way to bet on the outcome, as well as dealing with a younger version of Jabba The Hutt.



10. CORUSCANT
The seat of the Galactic Empire, Coruscant is probably the most visually impressive of the levels, as well as the most heavily defended.



11. RETURN TO NABOO
In a last ditch bid to defeat the evil Trade Federation, you must return to the Queen's planet of Naboo once again.

12. THE FINAL BATTLE
As Queen, you must collect a series of keys to rescue Naboo prisoners, while Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon face Darth Maul in the final showdown.

WAMPA STOMPER

Although many of the sub-quests are simple tasks requiring you to locate and recover objects, Level 8 includes an extremely tricky rescue mission. Following a request from a Hammerhead alien to find her enslaved son, Qui-Gon comes up against a beast, similar to a Wampa, who's a swine to defeat. The best method is to save your game after every successful attack; patience is essential if you want to complete *The Phantom Menace*.

Tatooine city of Mos Espa (home to the young slave Anakin Skywalker, and venue for the Pod Race), is teeming with creatures – from the recognisable Jawas, Tusken Raiders and Hammerheads, to obscure dinosaur-like beasts such as the Kaadu, and an enormous amount of new half monster/half-human individuals. Locked doors and unscalable walls still impede your progress, but Mos Espa offers the first real opportunity to indulge in the much-hyped adventure aspect of the game.

Approaching almost any character and pressing the 'activate' key is usually sufficient to provoke a response – whether helpful, useless or, in some cases, violent. Like LucasArts' ground breaking adventures, dialogue is of the highest quality. Only Jake Lloyd – who plays Anakin in the film – is in the film, but the voice actors used for Obi Wan, Qui Gon, the Queen, etc., are all startlingly good. In particular, Scott Cleverdon's impersonation of Ewan McGregor doing Alec Guiness is spot-on, and although the characters' mouths aren't lip-synched as well as they could be, the conversations are almost faultless.

Like *Grim Fandango*, multiple dialogue choices present themselves on a regular basis and it's up to you to dictate the chat based on which line you choose. The options present in the first half of the game have a fairly shallow structure, and every line in turn can be asked consecutively, but as the game continues and specific objectives are demanded, you'll find yourself returning to previous characters in order to re-ask questions in light of new information. Locating Anakin in Mos Espa is a particularly nightmarish task, requiring that you interrogate almost the entire city in pursuit of his home and his alien captor, Watto. Numerous sub-quests only serve to confuse matters, and it's not long before you've been asked to locate kidnapped children, and find supplies for people as subsidiary tasks. Admirably, these don't have to be completed in order to finish the game, but while playing as a venerable Jedi Knight, it's actually very hard to refuse people.

Apparently, whether you offer help or spurn their pleas has a direct effect on later events. But although evidence of the former was certainly true (letting a suspicious type out of prison results in an army of Battle Droids finding you in Theed), we didn't notice any ill effects resulting from the latter.

CLOUD CITY

And so it continues level after level. Whether

It's sometimes possible to avoid encounters like these, by finding an alternative route.

SYSTEM MISER

How *The Phantom Menace* will play on *your* PC

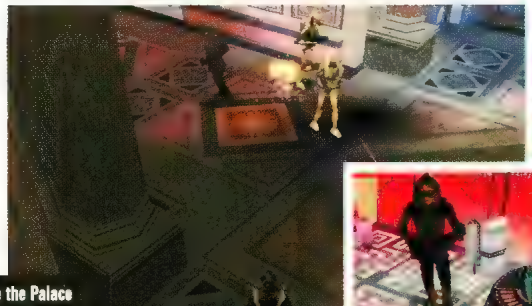
■ Test System **P166, 32Mb RAM, Voodoo1 (4Mb)**

VERDICT: Lowering the res helps slightly, but *TPM* remains almost unplayable on a 166. A miserable 10fps.

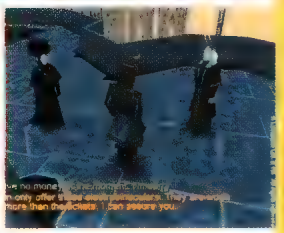
■ Test System **P233, 64Mb RAM, Voodoo2 (12Mb)**

VERDICT: Fast, fluid, but still slows down a little when the screen's full of characters. Perfectly playable, though.

Qui-Gon gets to visit a Cantina, but has to settle for an alco-pop and a bag of scratchings.

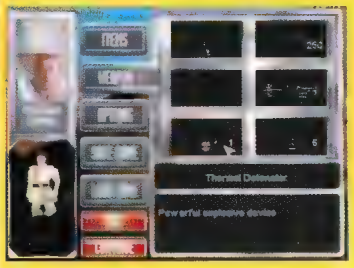


Once the Palace has been overrun by Droids, it's Captain Panaka's turn for action.



WHAT'S IN THE CLOAK?

The inventory of both your weapons and items is a clumsy affair. Accessed by hitting 'Escape', it takes a good couple of seconds before appearing, and isn't really necessary for playing the game. During the game, items are automatically identified if needed in a given situation, while weapons are bound to the number keys. A map would have been a far better inclusion at the expense of this unnecessary and sluggish interface.



PC GAMER PROFILE

The Phantom Menace is:
- A blend of game genres
- Too linear
- Star Wars

The Phantom Menace is not:
- A patch on *Jedi Knight*
- Very tough
- Star Trek, thank God

[illegible] slashing away with your lightsabre, firing a repeating blaster or tossing flash grenades willy nilly, *The Phantom Menace* is a more of a chore than a joy to play. Admittedly, the marriage between adventure game, puzzle game and arcade blaster hasn't really been attempted before, but some way into development LucasArts should have asked themselves *why* no-one has previously seen fit to gel these three disparate elements together.

It results in a game which is neither a straight shooter, adventure, or game of exploration – a pity, because you feel that if they'd concentrated on just one of these genres, the standard might have been higher.

Even the visuals are below par for LucasArts. Fog often blights the levels' screen extremities and when viewed close up, the characters appear crude, with too many sharp polygonal edges. Likenesses are generally accurate, although going against all the pre movie hype, Obi-Wan appears to have morphed into Cloud from *Final Fantasy VII*, complete with spiky Japanese hairdo and huge, blocky legs.

The soundtrack, on the other hand, is immediately impressive. From the opening scene's crawling text, to the context sensitive in-game music, John Williams' unmistakable talent is evident throughout. The cut scenes themselves – limited to brief snatches between levels – are, we're led to believe, exact copies of the film's sequences. They certainly have the unmistakable Star Wars air; that's to say they're polished, and involve plenty of spaceships flying into the camera. Like the rest of the game, they evoke an atmosphere of futuristic Cowboys and Indians that's as synonymous with Lucas' universe as the pseudo-mythological religion that runs throughout. Reverentia references to 'the force' are scattered liberally throughout the dialogue – enough to satisfy even the most dedicated followers of Yoda. Yet fans of Han Solo's trigger-happy style of combat may become disillusioned by the sabre-heavy combat on offer. Although weapons such as blaster rifles, thermal detonators and proton missile launchers are available, they feel out of place in the hands of the two Jedi Knights.

"More of a chore than a joy to play."

Undoubtedly, *The Phantom Menace*'s popularity rests on the new film, and the way that it allows you to play through the events that are soon to become cinematic legend; unfortunately, as good as it is at telling an epic story, it goes little way to satisfying the needs of real gamers. As an interactive guide to the story-line and characters of Episode I, it's invaluable. As an involving, exciting, and ground breaking game in its own right, it's lacking the innovation and high-production values synonymous with LucasArts' previous titles.

Yet ever aware that nothing we say about Star Wars games will prevent anyone from buying them, we're resorting, in desperation, to the old Jedi mind trick.

"This isn't the game you're looking for."

"This isn't the game you're looking for."

MATTHEW PIERCE

■ Publisher **LucasArts** ■ Developer **Big Ape** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P200, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95/98, 4Mb PCI or AGP D3D card** ■ Recommended **P266, 64Mb RAM** ■ Graphics Accelerator **3Dfx, D3D** ■ Multi Player **None** ■ Web Address **www.lucasarts.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

PC GAMER

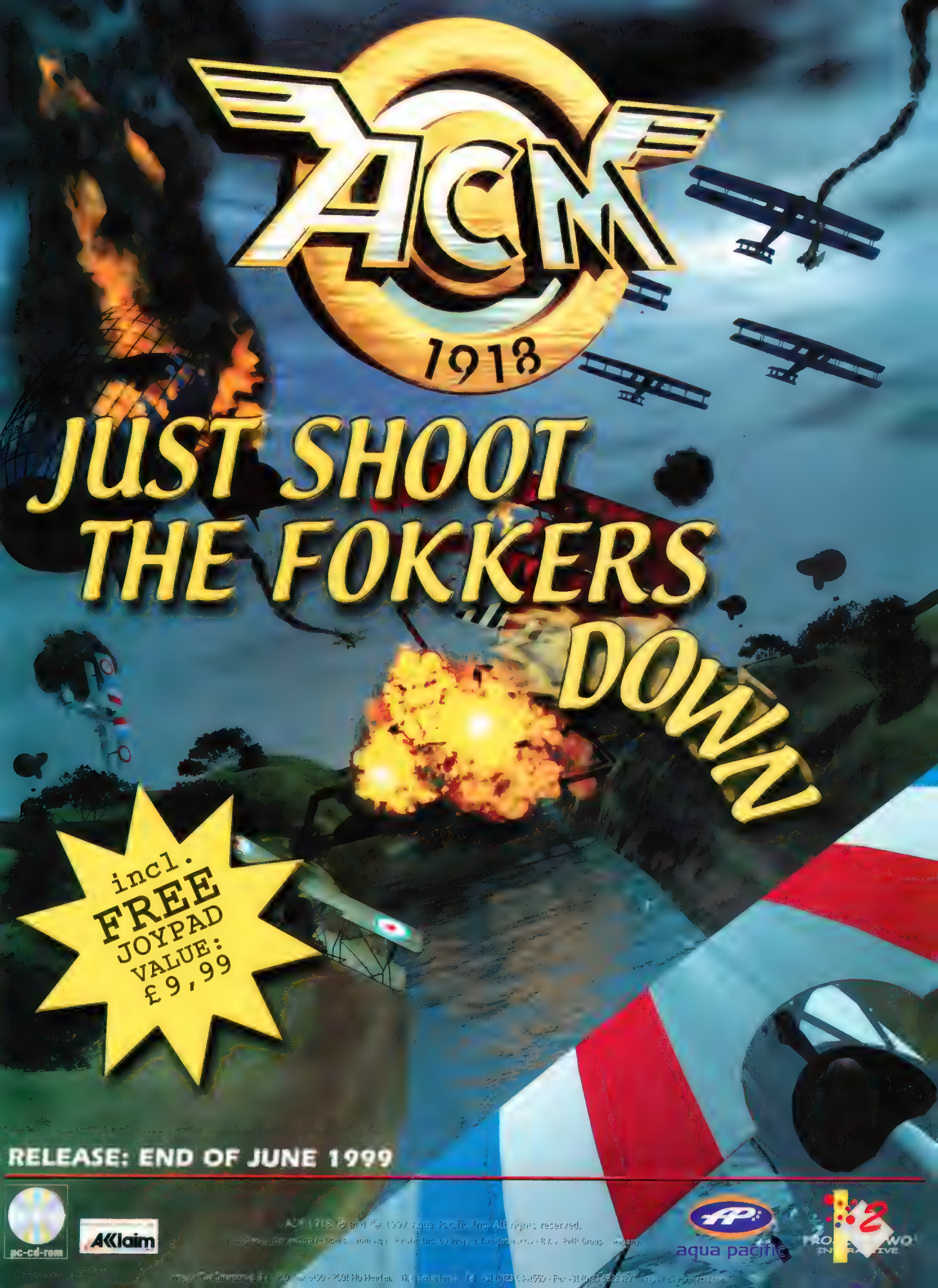
An above average action adventure game that really deserved to be so much more.

79%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Tomb Raider 3 (Eidos) PCG 64, 90%
Third-person action adventuring at its very best, starring some woman or other.

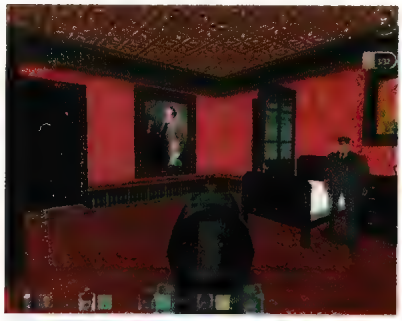
Shadows Of The Empire (LucasArts) PCG 49, 60%
Distinctly hit-and-miss Star Wars montage.

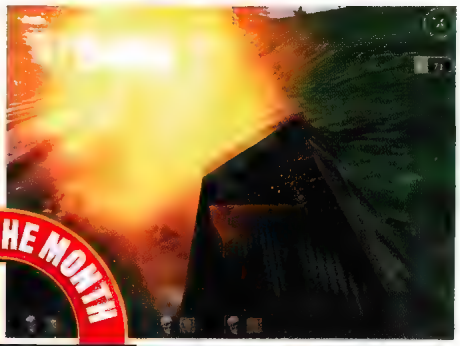

ACM
1918
JUST SHOOT THE FOKKERS DOWN
incl. FREE JOYPAD VALUE: £9,99
RELEASE: END OF JUNE 1999
pc-cd-rom
Akklaim
aqua pacific

GENRE: ACTION/STRATEGY

HIDDEN AND DANGEROUS

Can you say, "Best original game since *Half-Life*"? We just have.





GAME OF THE MONTH
PC GAMER
July 1999

Don't be put off by the darkness. It's the only friend you've got most of the time.

YOU love games (unless you've accidentally picked us up thinking that we're a guide to policemen's football teams, or something). So you know that even when a game gleefully pirouettes on your fun buttons there can *still* be a quiet voice of resentful disappointment picking holes in your new love. Because we *always* want more.

"Turn crawling shapes into twitching heaps."

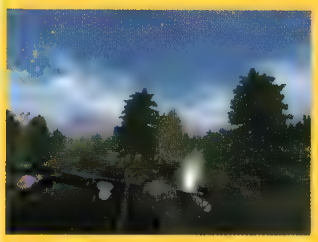
Take *Commandos*. An élite group deep behind [illegible] enemy lines is a stupendous idea. Upon playing, it became immediately obvious that despite its trappings it was just an elaborate puzzle game. We might have loved it anyway. But we knew it was a lost opportunity. Take *Delta Force*. We loved that. Even after we realised how little interaction with your team mates there was or how the ugly Voxel worlds led to repetitive strategy. After all, there's only so much you can do with barren hills. Or how *Rainbow Six*'s intricate planning sections were beautiful and shoddy AI reduced our crack-commandos to blundering simpletons, outfoxed by inward opening doors. Or how, just for once, couldn't someone just do something to silence that mental mumbling.

Let me introduce you to a friend of mine. He's called *Hidden And Dangerous*. He's here to save your soul.

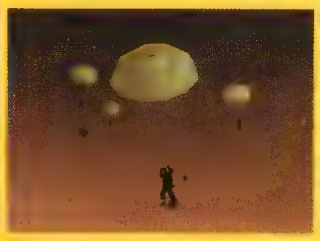
But first a slight detour away from the road marked 'Sheer hyperbole'. We're going to give some unembellished facts. Just in case we have any cynics in the house.

ACT ON THE THEATRE OF WAR

Six full campaigns are provided with *Hidden And Dangerous*, each telling a separate story that is (supposedly) based on real WWII events. No, we don't believe them either. Here's a rundown on each and its moment that you'll remember... forever.



ITALY
Dropped behind enemy lines, you have to free captured pilots. **Moment:** Examining the remains of the crashed train through your scope. Or the train-station raid.



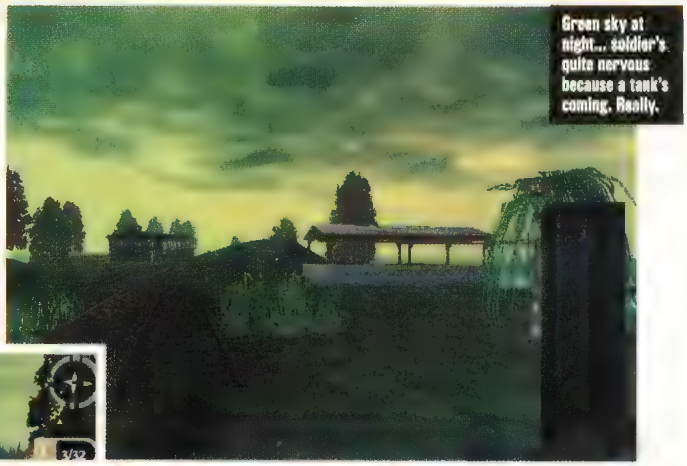
YUGOSLAVIA
The shipping on the river Danube fuels the war. You can help the war effort by annihilating the docks. **Moment:** Your unusual use of an enemy tank.

GERMANY
New rocket technology is being developed deep in a bunker in the Fatherland. You have to infiltrate and destroy it. **Moment:** Four men vs an armoured battalion.

NORWAY
The Germans are working on the nuclear bomb. It must be stopped. Guess who's going to do it? **Moment:** The subterranean submarine dock.

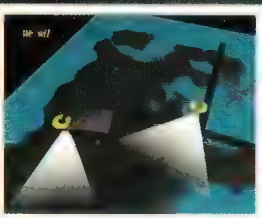
NORTH OCEAN
A German cruiser is sinking beneath the waves. There are intact code machines inside. The Allies could really use them. **Moment:** The whole damn thing.

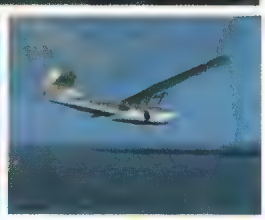
CZECKOSLOVAKIA
Help a turn-coat rocket scientist escape from both Nazis and encroaching Russians. Try not to die. **Moment:** The desperate rush to catch the last plane out of Kbely Airport.



Green sky at night... soldier's quite nervous because a tank's coming. Really.

This screenshot is better than the whole of Memphis Belle. Even the bit where the wing got shot off.





Lethal

FACT: *Hidden And Dangerous* is set during WWII. It boasts painstakingly researched period detail, with each half track, starched uniform and handgun lovingly constructed. The 23 infiltration/assassination demolition missions are divided into six campaigns, each set in a different theatre of the war. For each campaign you have to select a team of 8 soldiers from a pool of 40, though in any single mission you can only have four operatives.

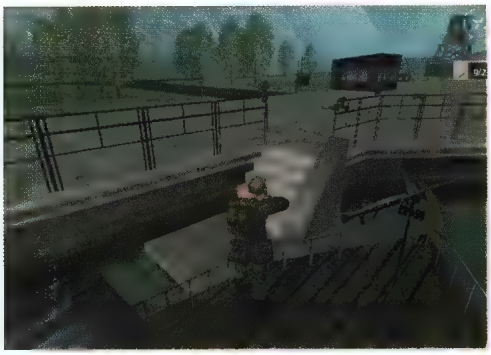
FACT: As expected, each soldier has a background and statistics. Unexpectedly, they actually make a real difference to their performance. A character with 100 in shooting is noticeably more fearsome than one with 80. A character with 80 endurance will survive more flying lead than a 55. A nigh stealth character is almost as efficient a skulker as the star of *Thief*. Observe our scientific proof in the 'Duck and cover' bit over the page.

FACT: You have complete control over each squadie. They possess a comprehensive selection of moves. Sprinting, crouch running, inching forward, side-rolling, leaping, ducking and diving rolls are easily performed. There is a wide range of weapon types, which are al noticeably different and which can all be looted from the crumpled bodies of your foe. You have to lie down to use the machine gun. Sniper rifles turn crawling shapes on the horizons into twitching heaps. German grenades are different to allied ones. Sub machine guns spit fire viciously in close quarters. If it exists in *HAD's* world, you can use it. If you can dispose of their owners, you can also commandeer fixed weaponry and vehicles. This includes bikes, half-tracks, trucks, cars, jeeps and tanks. Tanks with cannons. Oh yes.

FACT: While you can play completely by switching between troopers, there are other options. For minor flourishes there are keyboard shortcuts to simple orders such as cease fire or advance. For more grandiose plans you can retreat to the map screen and mark tasks for each member

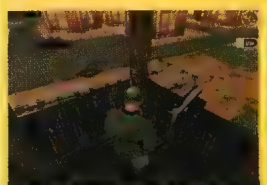
ILLUSION SOFTWORKS?

The Czech-based team formed and started work on their 3D engine in August 1997. They settled on *Hidden And Dangerous* in early 1998, which means that the game has gone from conception to completion in just over a year, while *still* having more features than most other games. So the next time a company drops an option due to "lack of development time" just point at *HAD* and tut loudly.

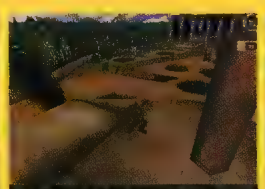


DUCK AND COVER

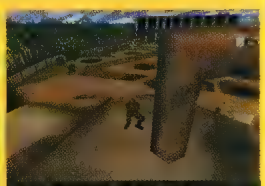
In the great tradition of governments using conscripts to test their new chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, we decided to see how much difference the soldier statistics make. The test: crawling towards a manned enemy machine-gun tower. The participants: a soldier with 55 stealth and a marine with 90. The results?



The eagle-eyed guard in question. He spotted both. Think of the weeping mothers of the world.



Mr Stumble-foot reached here before eating lead. Not bad, but he had plenty of cover.



Ninja managed to get here. Considerably further, and he got across more difficult sections.

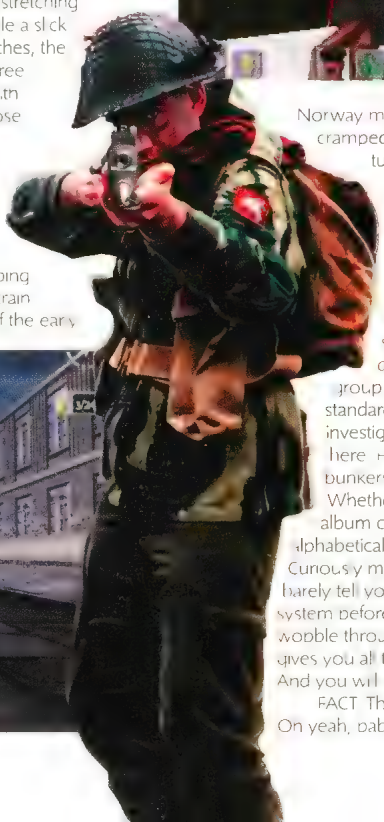
CONCLUSION:
While stealth is helpful, don't ever think of crawling towards armed men in broad daylight. It's bad for your health.

After capturing an enemy machine-gun nest, always be sure to turn it against the Hun.

Nazis. I hate those guys.

THE PIPES OF PIECES

Multi-player is more of an expansion of the single-player. Four people can fight as a team and complete any of the normal missions. If you've less than four, you're able to switch between any of the troops, often leading to both trying to wrench around the same man. It's the voices arguing in his head. Or shell-shock.



... to complete. When left alone your charges will fight viciously for their survival, so schemes don't need modification to account for the AI being a fool.

FACT. Each level is a stretching sweep of real estate. While a slick briefing suggests approaches, the areas are expansive and free enough to experiment with whatever ploys you choose. And, as opposed to *Commandos*, there's more than one way to complete a mission. Most importantly each level feels completely different. From the sweeping searchlights of the Italian train stage to the icy wastes of the early Norway missions, to the cramped Vietnam-esque tunnel crawling of late Norway, each one is a potent experience in itself.

FACT. Half of the extensive manual is a straight-faced discussion of small group tactics. What's the standard tactic for investigating a hill? It's here. How to explore bunkers? It's here. Whether to arrange your album collection alphabetically or by genre? Curiously missing. Most games barely tell you the control system before letting you wobble through alone. *HAD* gives you all the help you need. And you will need plenty.

FACT. The graphics engine. Oh yeah, baby, oh yeah.

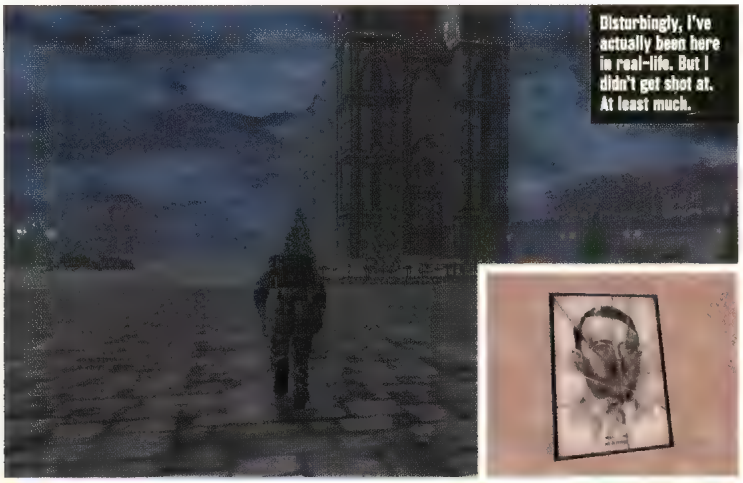
"Every great WWII movie scene rolled into one."

FACT. It's the best debut game since *Half Life*.

Hmmm. You may have noticed we're re-approaching that previously mentioned hyperactive enthusiasm highway. Good. It was getting stuffy in here.

Hidden And Dangerous is the soldier sim we've been waiting for. *Delta Force* was really a glorified slow motion single player shooter outdoors. *Rainbow Six* failed the entrance exam thanks to moronic AI. Basically, in its rural areas *Hidden And Dangerous* is better at being *Delta Force* than *Delta Force*. Indoors it's a better *Rainbow Six* than *Rainbow Six*. And on many of the missions it does both, while adding the pulse boosters of vehicles, trench warfare, psychology, realism, passion and style as afterthoughts.

In contradiction to the reviewing cliché



Disturbingly, I've actually been here in real-life. But I didn't get shot at. At least much.

SYSTEM MISER

How *Hidden & Dangerous* will play on *your* PC.

■ Test System **P166, 32Mb RAM, no 3D card installed**

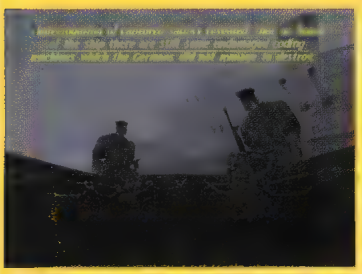
VERDICT: Still runs below the minimum specs. Reduce textures and resolution, and slow-motion *HAD* can be yours.

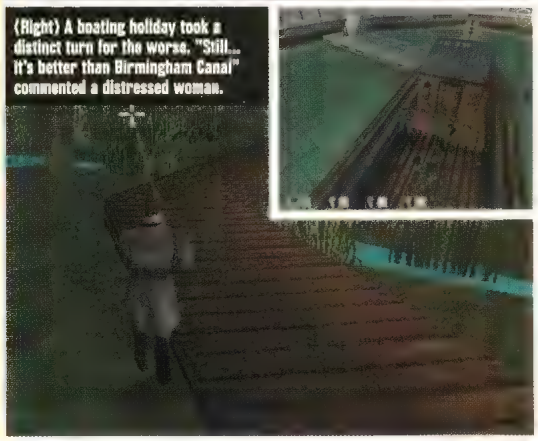
■ Test System **P266, 32Mb RAM, Voodoo1 (4Mb)**

VERDICT: Runs well at 680 x 480, with occasional slow-down when things get a little too much for the poor thing.

THE SHIP SONG

Hidden And Dangerous **drips purest droplets of atmosphere. It reaches a high point in one of the final levels, set aboard a sinking ship. The decks are in complete darkness until flares soar into the sky, revealing your position. Tracer bullets lick against the night. The twisted corridors force you into their claustrophobic embrace. By using your imagination you can even act out revenge fantasies against the cast of the Titanic. It's so convincing that in your future aged senility you'll believe you actually did it and tell your grandchildren it was a war-story.**





(Right) A boating holiday took a distinct turn for the worse. "Still... it's better than Birmingham Canal" commented a distressed woman.

Graphics don't matter", it's the supreme flexibility of *HAD's* engine that allows such variable delights. Since it can create and simulate just about anything, the designers have unparalleled freedom to experiment with flavour, texture and atmosphere. And what an atmosphere. It's like every memorable scene in every great WWII movie rolled into one. You have Dirty Dozen assaults of secluded chateaux. There's the repeated appearance of that great Where Eagles Dare moment when guards rush round a corner to investigate, only to get mown down by a well placed machine gun. There's the sheer Stalingrad horror of a tank shell separating your men into their constituent parts.

And despite all the violence, it never seems gratuitous. Like the classic *Cannon Fodder*, the underlying message is war is hell. Your 40 soldiers are all you have for all the campaigns. Once they're mown down, the only way to get them back is by replaying the whole level, as there's no mid-level save function. This simple decision adds value to each of the characters' lives, making it all the more wrenching when you lose one. *And* it means you can't just cynically send a man to his death to discover the enemy position then return to a saved game.

Problems? Control of your grenades isn't as easy as it should be. Perhaps some of the dark levels are *too* dark: your soldiers' AI will notice hostile troops well before your own fallible sight, leading to you just moving your men until someone shows up on your map screen, then switching away and letting them do it themselves. But when a game is this good criticism really is just irrelevant.

KIERON GILLEN

PCGAMER PROFILE

HAD is
- A soldier sim
- Detailed, yet accessible
- Going to take over your life

HAD is not
- A first-person shooter
- Easy to win
- Good for your social life

■ Publisher **Take 2** ■ Developer **Illusion Softworks** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P233, 32Mb RAM, 3D card** ■ Recommended **P233, 64Mb, 3D card+** ■ Graphics Accelerator **Direct3D** ■ Multi Player **Internet, LAN, modem** ■ Web Address **www.illusionsoftworks.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

PC GAMER

If the idea appeals to you in the remotest, buy it. If it doesn't, buy it and change your mind.

93%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Delta Force (Novalogic) PCG 67, 90%
A simpler game that's suitable for a swift sniper-blast between *HAD* epic struggles

Rainbow Six (Take 2) PCG 64, 86%
Based solely around storming buildings. More complicated planning, yet not so involving

GENRE: REAL-TIME STRATEGY

TANKTICS

Once again DMA dish up something completely different. Perhaps too different...

BUILD 'EM HIGH

The Part-o-Matic spits out tank bits in a pre-set order which have to be put together to make tanks. The number of weapons is only limited by the number of engines, so with a bit of imagination, some towering monstrosities can be unleashed upon the enemy.

FROM that name, you might imagine that the game's got something to do with tanks. And you'd be right. You might also suspect something deeply tactical. And you'd be wrong. Because *Tanktics'* strategical elements never rise above the simplistic, and the limited interface and controls prevent any finely poised military movements you might be contemplating.

Everything about *Tanktics* screams simplicity. Knocking together tanks out of recycled spare parts and hurling them at the baddie black tanks is essentially simple, but also slow and frustrating. Hovering over the battlefield is your cursor, which, in the first campaign, resembles a grinning pterodactyl in a waistcoat. The flying beast carries a magnet (just bear with me) to pick up tank components, rocks and sheep.

Any item - including the sheep - can

"Sheep can be enslaved."

be dropped into a recycling machine called the Part-o-Matic, where they are turned into a variety of useful tank parts. The parts get spat out, and you then use the dinosaur crane to drop the components on top of each other. Sheep can be enslaved to trundle along the treadmill, powering up the Part-o-Matic so it churns bits out faster. Rocks can be dropped on enemy black sheep or used to block off roads. Still with me?

If games can be commended for their beautiful simplicity then *Tanktics* should be hounded for its *clumsy* simplicity. The interface makes it so hard to get anything done that you feel as though you're constantly battling the control mechanism rather than your real enemy - the black tanks. Using the cursor is like bobbing for apples as you have to use its *shadow* to judge where it's actually positioned and what you're going to select. In other words it's a constant trial of misjudgement and ripping the tops off the tank you just built because you've forgotten to turn your magnet off. And in a game where there's so much to do, the system of manually constructing everything with a dodgy Pterodactyl-crane is simply too much to cope with.

The other major problem is the artificial intelligence. In the enemy this manifests itself as a compulsive desire to obliterate your Part-o-Matic to the exclusion of everything else. So you can waltz around the rest of the map causing merry hell, and the enemy won't lift a finger to stop you, leaving you to take out the pre-programmed patrolling enemy at your leisure. Which makes *Tanktics* more of a puzzler than a strategy game.

Unfortunately, despite the presence of some delightful ideas, *Tanktics* is often more painstaking than knockabout, and DMA's sadistic refusal to provide an in-game save facility often leaves you wondering if it's all worth it when a couple of hours' play goes up in smoke thanks to a stupid tank.

ROSS ATHERTON

Looking like a teacup and a gramophone horn, the Part-o-Matic is nonetheless your lifeline.

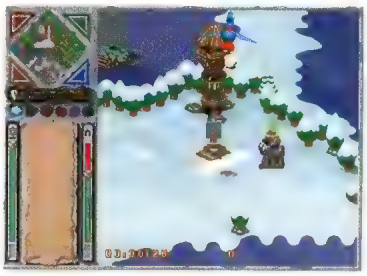
Dinky

PC GAMER PROFILE

Tanktics is
- Original
- Frustrating
- A combo of puzzles with RTS

Tanktics is not:
- C&C
- Very varied
- Much fun

The comedy scenery really grates after, ooh, five minutes.



■ Publisher **Gremlin** ■ Developer **DMA** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P133, 16Mb RAM, x4 CD-ROM, Windows 95** ■ Recommended **P166, 24Mb RAM** ■ Graphics Accelerator **None** ■ Multi Player **None** ■ Web Address **www.gremlin.com/games/tanktics** ■ Release Date **Out now**

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Warcraft II (Blizzard) PCG 27, 92%
Cartoony *C&C* clone, ideally balanced and colourful, and it's still a good strategy game today

KKND 2 (Sierra) PCG 56, 76%
A pretty standard RTS, but allowed you to make your own tanks. So it's a bit like *Tanktics*. Sort of.

PC GAMER

Moderately entertaining but essentially shallow strategy-puzzle romp. Not for Field-Marshalls.

66%

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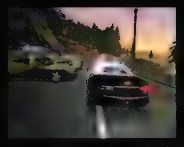

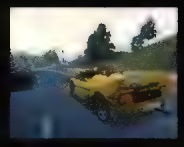

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GENRE: SPORTS

CRICKET WORLD CUP 99

The World Cup is in full swing, but have EA Sports got their team match-fit in time?

Honestly. You'd think they would change out of their pyjamas first.

The fielder's "I'm a little tea-pot" warm-up routine turned out to be useful.

LET'S SEE THAT AGAIN

CWC 99 features an excellent replay feature which lets you pause the game at any moment and review the action from a variety of camera angles. In fact, normal play can be viewed from these angles too, although the standard 'TV-style' angle is the easiest to play with. A stump-camera is offered, but a protector-cam for those painful moments is sadly missing.

FACT: no-one has ever made a supremely good cricket game. Another fact: if anyone could do it, it would be either Codemasters or EA Sports. *Brian Lara Cricket* (PCG 69, 84%) was the Codies' offering and, as good as it was, its multitude of minor faults saw it fall just short of perfection. So with the World Cup licence, and all their sporting experience, EA Sports have no excuse not to come up with a world-class game.

But cricket's a funny old sport, full of weird rules and with a language all of its own. By comparison, any half-sentient monkey can cobble together a passable football game. The nub of the problem is that a real game of cricket depends on the subtlest of factors: minor adjustments of ball, air, pitch, outfield and even psychological conditions all have major effects on a game.

Cricket World Cup 99 does its utmost to reflect all this and more, yet manages to stumble over its shoelaces just as it releases a stump-cracking yorker.

"Batting is a tremendously difficult task."

Timed as it's to coincide with the real World Cup (currently available at all good cricketing grounds near you), *CWC* allows for one-day friendlies, Super Six and full-scale World Cup competitions between all of the participating nations. There are all the options you might expect: 5 to 70 overs, a full range of weather effects, great commentary by Richie Benaud and David Gower and 21 stadia from Lords to Amsterdam (which explains Phil Tufnell's absence from the England squad). Each side has a full squad of 20 players with up-to date statistics and biographies. In fact, regular patches can be downloaded from the Internet to reflect the teams' form and injuries as the tournament progresses.

Most important, though, is how the game actually plays. *Brian Lara Cricket* set a high standard for in-game controls, yet *CWC* manages to marginally improve and simplify upon them. Control of both batting and bowling is straightforward with either mouse, keyboard or joypad. Bowling involves positioning a target, judging power and applying relevant direction (leg- or off

There's plenty of data and feedback on your performance.

SYSTEM MISER

How *Cricket World Cup 99* will play on *your* PC.

■ Test System **P166, 32Mb RAM, No 3D card installed**

VERDICT: With the suggested minimum specs, *CWC* is totally unplayable. It's far too jerky to even see what's going on.

■ Test System **P200, 32Mb RAM, Voodoo1 (4Mb)**

VERDICT: Looks much better, but it's still a bit too jerky to be perfectly accurate with the tricky batting.

DROPPED CATCHES – A GUIDE TO *CWC'S* GRAPHICAL GLITCHES

1. Giggle with amusement as players tippy-toe everywhere, like little pixies!

2. Snort with derision as the fielders make blind catches over their shoulders!

3. Become slightly annoyed as short-pitched intimidating bouncers don't bounce!

4. And get really quite angry when fielders refuse to sprint to cut off balls headed for the boundary!

PC GAMER PROFILE

CWC 99 is
- The best cricket game on the PC
- Bang up to date
- Good-looking

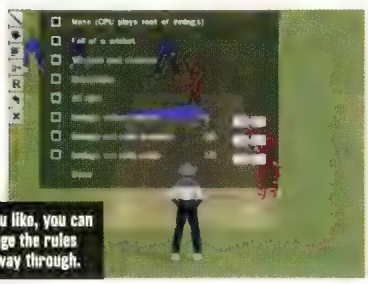
CWC 99 is not
- Perfectly-balanced
- Easy to beat
- Filled with jargon

"Could you bowl it a bit slower this time, Mr Ambrose?"

Three favourite magical moments from modern games of cricket. (Above) "Hnnngghh!" (Middle) "Owzat!" (Right) "Bugger."

Googly

spin, seam, swing, cut, etc.) with a clever skill-stop button. Batting requires you to point a direction cone roughly where you want the ball to go, and then to time a defensive, ordinary or powerful shot



If you like, you can change the rules halfway through.

And this is where the problems begin For while bowling is pretty easy, provided you vary your deliveries and keep your concentration, batting is a tremendously difficult task. Timing a stroke correctly is absolutely crucial, but doing this effectively is very hard. For example, driving through cover is much harder than it should be, and hooking is incredibly difficult. And then the AI batsmen are able to sweep for six deliveries which are full and two feet outside off stump. Such oddities are both disappointing and mystifying

But then it all seems to calm down, and for half an hour, it's flawless. Bat cautiously and the bowlers will become aggressive. Play smartly to the gaps in the field and the fielders will frantically rearrange themselves, which is very pleasing. The game rewards imaginative, aggressive bowling, and the difficulty level is set just right for that side of the game. Fielding, thankfully, is nearly all AI-controlled, and is largely very good. But then, just when you think EA have cracked this most tricky of sports sims, the batting spoils the party. The difficulty option takes much of the sting out, but then the bowling becomes a bit too easy.

As a big cricket fan, I am desperate for someone to make the definitive cricket game; the gentlemanly game's equivalent of *FIFA 99*. Codies and EA Sports have both come perilously close, and *CWC* just edges out *Brian Lara*, but both have too many flaws to claim the cricketing crown.

ROSS ATHERTON

"GOT NIM, YES!"

The commentary, by David Gower and Richie Benaud, is superb. Because the game is set in the context of the World Cup, they give a sensible overview of any match you choose at the beginning, and offer satisfyingly sparse comments during play. This means that their limited commentary doesn't become too familiar or grating, and they've always got a few new ones up their sleeves. Such as Richie's surprisingly appropriate "Hmm. Well, I guess that was rather curious."

■ Publisher **EA Sports** ■ Developer **Creative Assembly** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P166, 32Mb RAM, 150Mb HD** ■ Recommended **P200, 32Mb RAM, 3D card, 200Mb HD** ■ Graphics Accelerator **Direct 3D** ■ Multi-Player **2 players on one PC** ■ Web Address **www.ea-europe.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Brian Lara Cricket PCG 69, 84%
Pretty similar to *CWC*, with Test options and that nice man Geoffrey Boycott.

International Cricket Captain PCG 59, 75%
Cricket management game with loads of players, options and lovely stats.

PC GAMER

Nearly cricket heaven. Great controls and graphics are let down by difficult batting.

86%

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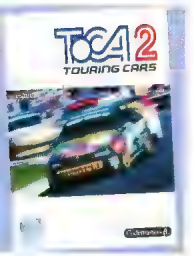

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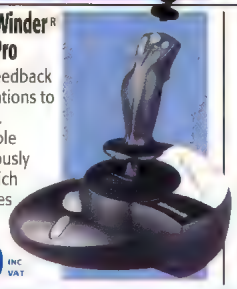

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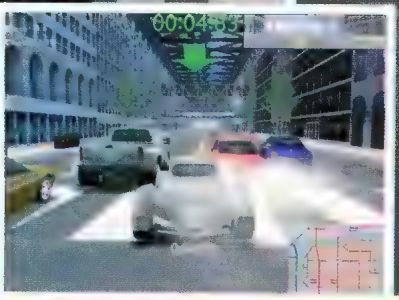
GENRE: DRIVING

MIDTOWN MADNESS

First rule: what's behind you is not important.

You *can* squeeze through that gap!

Didn't your driving instructor always tell you to drive assertively?



GAME OF DISTINCTION
PC GAMER
July 1999

CALLING ALL CARS

Midtown Madness' **multi-player games are hugely disappointing. They've tried to give you a bit of choice – you can riffle through all the one-player races, as well as a special Cops and Robbers set where you have to deliver gold shipments, but – absurdly – you and your Net chums drive alone. No traffic, no shirty police, no buses pulling into the fast lane – nowt. It's just not on, frankly. While we concede it's a fair bit of fun with all eight drivers taking part, the lost opportunity to nudge someone into a traffic jam at over 100mph means we've given up multi-player games already.**

Multi-player is dead – long live single-player!

JONATHAN and cars: "Erk. Ugh. Tsk. I still can't quite accept that they're not allowed to knock you down and kill you. Oh, no thanks, I'll walk."

Jonathan and cars in *Midtown Madness*: "Aaarghh! Get out get out of my WAY! Mmmph. Yes – no yes! Handbr HANDBRAKE! No – yes – yes! Hargle har har! Into the lorry of justice with you, friend What the – Nooooo! NOOOOooo. I HATE TREES. And the police."

Readers, I love it. After a smothering run of completely crap games that have tried to drain my spine with their jabbing proboscides, *Midtown Madness* has made things fun again. It's a driving game, in the same way that the mighty *Micro Machines* is a driving game – the wearyingly tedious stats of PC-dom have been peeled away to reveal the nutritious fruit of entertainment You needn't even bother with the speedometer or damage indicator, as you can see perfectly well what's going on. This bit steers, these bits regulate speed, and this bit does handbrake turns. Off you go

And what a go there is to off. You're racing through Chicago – a populated Chicago, with short-tempered pedestrians, civic amenities and terrible traffic problems (The citizens can't be killed. Does that bother you? Well, it shouldn't.) At every turn you're apt to smack into a taxi or something, and having to pass a swarming crossroads with the lights against you is sheerly exhilarating You're not driving around some made up course with obvious tricks like putting a tight

"It's a thing to cause big grinning."

turn after a blind corner (excuse my not knowing the technical terms, but I hate driving games. You see? I hate driving games, yet have been playing *Midtown Madness* for six hours at a time) but through a real city, with landmarks, glass-fronted shops, rush hours, attentive police force, box filled alleyways and pleasant parks.

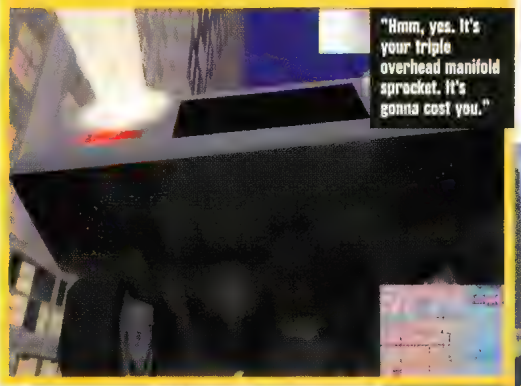
And drawbridges

And motorways, that, sensationally, you have to drive up the wrong way

What you're trying to do is pass a series of checkpoints, then find the unti

IT'S QUITE A MACHINE

My favourite way to play *Midtown Madness* is in Super Widescreen In Your Car Vision. This makes the screen go letterboxy, increases the speed by about half again and feels ever so much like being in a film. Your low-slung point of view from the driver's seat means you can't see as far ahead as usual, and every collision is absolutely terrifying. Couple this with the office Fanatec Monte Carlo steering wheel and you have a Mode Of Champions to rank with the Of Champions-est. For Gumball authenticity, switch off the rear-view mirror.



"Hmm, yes. It's your triple overhead manifold sprocket. It's gonna cost you."

SYSTEM MISER

How *Midtown Madness* will play on *your* PC.

■ Test System **P166, 32Mb RAM, no 3D card installed**

VERDICT: *Midtown* on a P166 is unplayable, even with everything minimised and the display interlaced.

■ Test System **P266, 32Mb RAM, Voodoo! (4Mb)**

VERDICT: Perfectly serviceable – a bit jerky, and you have to knock the detail down a few points, but it's acceptable.

You can drive a variety of silly (but entirely genuine) American cars.

BOBBIES

There's no point playing it safe, as your lunatic opponents attract the police anyway. Once activated, they never give up, and they're suicidally keen, slewing across the road in front of you like deranged atomic slugs. Later in the game you face three jam-sandwiches at a time (intensely evil), and we're promised road blocks in the finale. Coo.

Excellent

then-nidden finish line. The other games are the Cruise, where you can indestructibly learn the best ways around, but which, upsettingly, I couldn't get chased in by more than one police car; the Blitz, an exciting race against the clock where you have to finish the whole thing before the time runs out, not just reach the next flag; the circuit laps; and the Multi-player set (see the 'Calling All Cars' box). Although there's just the one full-scale city, ingenious design gives you 32 distinctly different courses. Anyway, the Checkpoint game's my favourite

Your opponents are, essentially, 'bots' They don't all drive as a pack (brilliantly, you can take the checkpoints in any order you wish), they react sensibly to obstacles (dodging around cars sent spinning into their path, for example, although not supernumanly – you won't just be sitting there watching them all zoom off into the distance, and one of the great pleasures of the game is seeing a huge pile up occur that has nothing to do with you) and they're intimidatingly competitive. As you progress through the game, they become better. They aren't simply given faster cars, they *drive more skilfully*, taking devious alternative routes and ploughing through supermarkets as shortcuts. I haven't enjoyed being thrashed by a game so much since, well, I can't remember the last time I enjoyed it. (What a tragedy, eh?) It's a thing to cause big grinning

Errors? Sometimes the scripted traffic diotically turns directly into you (but they don't do the same things each time, and if you're good enough, you'll get past the danger spots before the lights turn green). There are no replays, and the other cars are unforgivably known only as 'Opponent 1' and so on when giving them names would have introduced that vital element of personal revenge, but, embarrassingly, that's all I can think of. There's even a bit of depth to it, with a Pro mode, secret bits and ten acknowledgeably different vehicles (including a bus and an 18-wheel artic), and a blissfully single 'physics realism' slider if you'd like to go from the extreme of deadly accurate handling to flipping over cinematically every time you sneeze

Midtown Madness is excellent. Congratulations, er, Microsoft. (Blimey.)

JONATHAN NASH

PC GAMER PROFILE

MM is
- **Ignitingly fast**
- **Resolutely non-fatal**
- **Thrillingly tough**

MM is not
- **For drivers with beards**
- **Kindly**
- **Over in a twinkling**

■ Publisher **Microsoft** ■ Developer **Angel** ■ Price **£40** ■ Minimum System **P166, 16Mb RAM, 300Mb HD** ■ Recommended **P266, 32Mb RAM, 3D card** ■ Graphics Accelerator **Direct 3D** ■ Multi-Player **Network, modem, Internet** ■ Web Address **www.microsoft.com/games** ■ Release Date **Out now**

PC GAMER

The Gumball Rally – but on the PC. Stupendous fun that genuinely lasts the full distance.

91%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

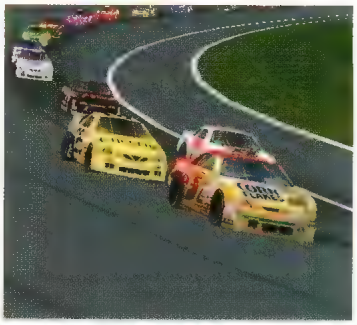
Speed Busters (Ubi Soft) PCG 66, 80%
Zany and imaginative racer with added dinosaurs and gorillas. No, really.

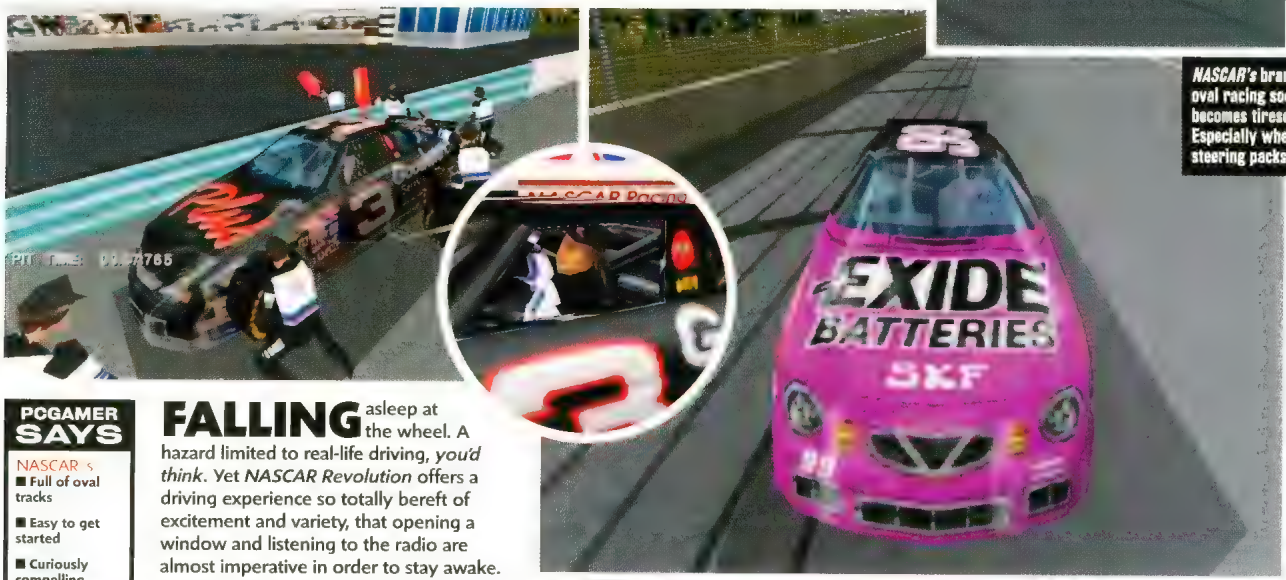
Carmageddon 2 (SCi) PCG 63, 84%
Pedestrian-spattering, ELSPA-baiting, gore-filled driving game, now infamous.

GENRE: RACING SIM

NASCAR REVOLUTION

Left a bit... left a bit... left a bit more... lef... zzz.





NASCAR's brand of oval racing soon becomes tiresome. Especially when the steering packs up.

PCGAMER SAYS

NASCAR is
- Full of oval tracks
- Easy to get started
- Curiously compelling

NASCAR is not
- Gorgeous to gaze on
- Full of variety
- Overly realistic

FALLING asleep at the wheel. A hazard limited to real-life driving, *you'd think*. Yet *NASCAR Revolution* offers a driving experience so totally bereft of excitement and variety, that opening a window and listening to the radio are almost imperative in order to stay awake.

In fairness, it's not wholly the fault of the game developers. NASCAR racing is, after all, a remarkably dull form of motor sport. The overwhelming majority of the tracks are oval, and, for reasons best known to the organisers, they're all raced around in an anti-clockwise direction. Even commentator Benny "Who he?" Parsons' continuous protestations that "Al oval tracks are *not* created equally" can't disguise the fact that after 20 laps, tapping the 'left' key, both boredom and cramp begin to set in

The in-car view manages to up the frame rate a little.

Gauche

"Extensive pile-ups are frequent."

Of course, you *can* customise almost everything about the races, including the number of laps, computer car AI and number of opponents, but no matter how extensive your tweaking, the game remains an exercise in committing two corners to memory. During practice, learn the exact speed to best take the curves, then simply apply your knowledge during qualification and race day.

It would be even easier if it weren't for your pesky rivals, who not only number an astonishing 42 but also obstinately insist on sticking to the racing line whatever the position of others. Consequently, amusingly extensive pile-ups are frequent, with just the merest touch of the wall or another car eliciting a race-ending crash

Your toughest challenge, however, doesn't involve avoiding your opponents, but in wrestling with your own car's handling. Forget tight turns; even moving the tyres *slightly* requires a Herculean effort Should you be unlucky enough to hit the wall and spin in the wrong direction, there's almost no hope of righting yourself thanks to the enormous turning circle, and applying the brake appears to have little impact on the car's speed, let alone giving you an increased ability to direct it

Curiously, though, and despite all these faults, *NASCAR Revolution* keeps you playing for longer than you should. The constant traffic, coupled with the 'one hit, and it's game over' style of play frustrate and thrill in equal measure. And if the pop-up is ugly, the pit stops tediously slow and the physics occasionally unrealistic, the pleasure of barging your way through a pack of over 40 jostling cars, before ramming the leader into the wall and causing an almighty pile-up behind you, is undeniable. Fun for a few minutes, anyway.

MATTHEW PIERCE

■ Publisher **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer **EA Sports** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P200, 32Mb RAM** ■ Recommended **P266, 64Mb RAM, 3D card, steering wheel** ■ Graphics Accelerator **3Dfx, D3D** ■ Multi Player **Network, Modem, Internet** ■ Web Address **www.nascarrevolution.com/** ■ Release Date **Out now**

PCGAMER

Ovals are fun for five minutes. *NASCAR Revolution's* got 17 of them. Work it out.

65%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

NASCAR Racing 2 (Sierra) PCG 39, 87%
Eclipsed by the advent of 3D cards Chugs along by today's standards, even if the game's well rounded

Viper Racing (Sierra) PCG 67, 81%
Not strictly a NASCAR game, but the handling's similarly tricky, and the courses are more interesting

single and multiplayer next generation killer

WILD METAL COUNTRY

4/5 - ARCADE. **9/10 - GAMESPOT.**
9/10 - GAME ON LINE. **85% ULTIMATE PC.**
85% - PC FORMAT.

"If this doesn't become a multi-player classic, we'll eat our own faces".
DIGITIZER;CHANNEL 4

"It's manic, it's skillful, and it's as addictive as a Quake deathmatch".
PC FORMAT

WHERE THE BIG GAME IS

PC CD-ROM

Download the demo from: www.wildmetalcountry.co.uk

Gremlin INTERACTIVE

GENRE: ROLE PLAYING

EVERQUEST

Boldly go where no role-player has gone before... Into a 3D-accelerated tavern heaving with Americans.

(Main) The Freeport village fête was going well until the skeletons turned up, pissed on mead.

GAME OF DISTINCTION
PC GAMER
July 1999

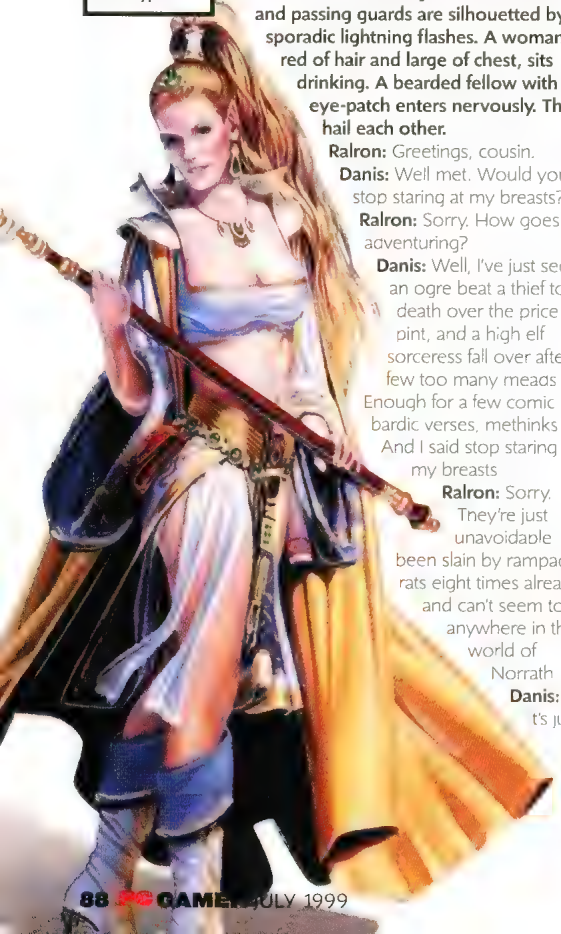
PCGAMER PROFILE

Everquest is

- A massive world full of orcs and elves
- The first 3D accelerated on-line RPG
- Quite capable of consuming your life

Everquest is not.

- Something to take on lightly
- Playable off-line. At all
- Breaking down RPG stereotypes



PICTURE the scene. Predictably, a tavern. Rain dashes against the window and passing guards are silhouetted by sporadic lightning flashes. A woman, red of hair and large of chest, sits drinking. A bearded fellow with an eye-patch enters nervously. They hail each other.

Ralron: Greetings, cousin.

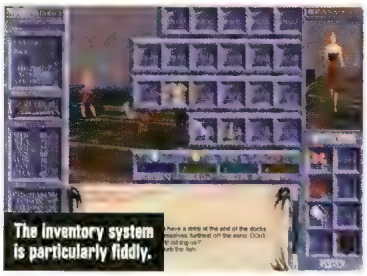
Danis: Well met. Would you stop staring at my breasts?

Ralron: Sorry. How goes the adventuring?

Danis: Well, I've just seen an ogre beat a thief to death over the price of a pint, and a high elf sorceress fall over after a few too many meads. Enough for a few comic bardic verses, methinks. And I said stop staring at my breasts.

Ralron: Sorry. They're just unavoidable. I've been slain by rampaging rats eight times already and can't seem to get anywhere in this world of Norrath.

Danis: Oh, it's just



The inventory system is particularly fiddly.

because your reflexes are a little under par. I'm managing to earn a tidy living by hunting orcs and pumas in the wasteland around Freeport. Ever since Talis invited me into the Guild Atani, things have been dangerously easy. The leather armour's certainly helpful. And I've even learned a few magic songs. Fancy joining up with Tangle and I when we head out again?

Ralron: Don't know... is she the one with the (gestures expressively)

Danis: Ralron... *every* woman in Norrath has the... (expansive gesture).

Such was our time in *Everquest*, the (hnnnggggh) 'massively multi-player' on line RPG which finally brings glorious 3D acceleration to the world of orcs and goblins. You'll have to forgive the clichés here, if only because you'll have to if you're to play *Everquest* – as traditional an RPG world as you've ever shaken a Kobold at. Choose from 12 races and 14 classes, collect experience and treasure while hopping up levels. Don't come here looking for avant-garde experiments.

We'd guess the reason for such basic Tolkien-ism is to make it instantly accessible to the vast majority of RPGers. The only exception is the almost self-conscious addition of the black Egyptian-styled

YOU GOTTA ROLE WITH IT

Ross' experience

With a 33.6k modem, the overall performance of the game varied from reasonable to utterly diabolical – it once took me a full ten seconds to turn through 180 degrees. This sort of thing, coupled with the poor interface, ruined the whole experience for me. Still, interacting with unpredictable human characters (who aren't trying to kill you) in a 3D environment is a novel and rather curious experience.

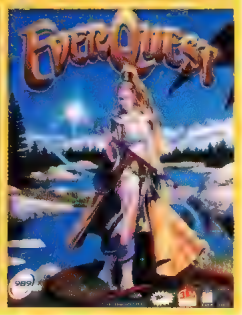
Kieron's experience

Despite my equally low specs, my 56k modem led to a much more joyous gaming experience. On the moments where lag increased to unpleasurable levels I found moving to a slightly less busy area neatly solved the problem. I was certainly pleased to encounter people who were willing to role-play characters, as well as the inevitable "Cool. Kill Orc. Are U OK?" atmosphere-killers. It's immediately apparent that this is an entire world on a CD-ROM. Got a spare year? Love RPGs? Free phone calls? *Everquest* is your deepest, darkest fantasy made flesh. Or at least disc.

(Left) Kieron meets a sticky end while (right) Ross organises a diving tournament.

VALLEY DEEP AND MOUNTAIN HIGH

All the artwork in this game, from the front of the box to the character skins, strongly suggests that the designers don't meet enough real women. Okay, it *is* a fantasy world, but we can't help feeling that all the Amazonian thighs, flimsy adventuring outfits and preposterous cleavages give a rather lop-sided feel to *Everquest*. That said, female characters aren't restricted in anything they do, and in some cases may gain more trust and sympathy from other player-characters than male characters. The chauvinistic pigs.



SYSTEM MISER

How *Everquest* will play on *your* PC.

■ Test System **P166, 32Mb RAM, Voodoo1 (4Mb), 33.6k modem**

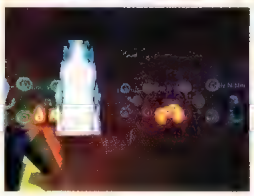
VERDICT: Jerky to the point of madness at times, but playable by the patient. The engine is not the problem – it's lag.

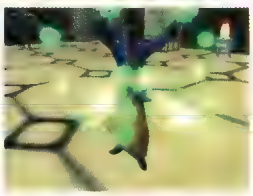
■ Test System **P200, 64Mb RAM, Voodoo1 (4Mb), 56k modem**

VERDICT: Stunning and mostly smooth at higher resolutions, but still occasional bouts of Parkinson's-like juddering.

Magic looks pretty good, but this lot just look like Morris Dancers.

Ah, the humorous banter of typical tavern-dwellers.





Eternal

Erudites, the most intellectual and magical of all races. To a degree, *Everquest* succeeds. If you've played a computer or paper RPG, from *Dungeon Master* to *AD&D*, you'll be almost familiar with its nuances, even if the

"We're talking a *serious* investment of time."

menu system is unnecessarily complicated

Since combat is semi-automatic, with you clicking on your foe to activate the melee, *Everquest* only really starts pushing your buttons when it comes to exploration The world is massive, with nine separate cities, each immaculately designed. From the dread caverns of the Dark Elves to the wide savannah around Freeport, each area is an individual joy. While it lacks the detail of *Ultima Online* (you can't own property for example), you can still get involved in forming guilds, adventuring parties or even learning a craft, such as baking or sewing.

As with all on-line RPGs, the more time you give it, the greater your rewards. Do not buy *EQ* expecting to be able to give Gandalf a Chinese burn within a couple hours of play. Or even days. Or weeks. To play *EQ* to the highest levels we're talking about a *serious* investment of time

Ralron: Where now?
Danis: Well, Lenis of the Guild Atari is in a duel. Some leery Paladin pinched her backside and she wants satisfaction
Ralron: I'm sure she does.
Danis: Less of it, first level boy. Me and some of the girls are considering jumping him on the way back. Or maybe I'll just try to find some bait so I can finally get this useless fishing rod working. Another couple of levels and I'll catch the ship eastwards to Faydwer and meet some dwarves. What about you?
Ralron: I'm not sure. Frankly I'm considering selling these monkish robes and heading back to the farm. At least the cows can't gore you to death
Danis: Don't be too sure. Heard the one about the Giant Ogre Deathknight? Got gnawed to death by a Giant Armadillo
Ralron: Unbelievable
Danis: I know . wait-a-sec STOP STARING AT MY BREASTS

KIERON GILLEN AND ROSS ATHERTON

PAYING THROUGH THE NOSE

As you may have noticed, *Everquest* is a multi-player-only game. And as if hogging the phone-line and paying for local phone calls isn't bad enough, you've still got to fork out a subscription, in the fine tradition of *Ultima Online*. While your first month is free, you'll then pay $9.89 (about £6) per month thereafter – or less if you pay for several months in advance. All for the privilege of connecting to the US servers while we wait patiently for a European server to be set up, so expect some pretty bad lag times. Grumble. However, the game is constantly being updated in the form of automatic patches, and there's no telling what it will be like in a few months' time.

■ Publisher **Sony (available at Electronics Boutique)** ■ Developer **989 Studios** ■ Price **£35** ■ Min System **P166, 32Mb RAM, 3D card, 500Mb HD, 28k modem** ■ Recommended **P200, 64Mb, 56k modem** ■ Graphics Accelerator **Direct 3D, Glide** ■ Multi Player **Only** ■ Web Address **www.everquest.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

PC GAMER

Derivative yet ground-breaking. On-line RPGs have never been as immediately impressive.

85%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Ultima Online (EA) PCG 52, 90%
No 3D graphics, yet it offers a more complex role-playing environment.

Baldur's Gate (Interplay) PCG 65, 89%
If you can't play on-line, this is pretty much the state of the art in traditional RPGs.

GENRE: SPORTS SIM

PUMA STREET SOCCER

What do you get when you take 12 from 22? Not ten out of ten, it seems...

Look at the passing options here. Rubbish.

PLAYING FOR KEEPS

Almost as a concession to the fact that *Puma* soon degenerates into an end-to-end cycle of throw-out, dribble, shot, save, throw-out, dribble, shot, save, Pixelstorm have included super shots which become available once the power bar is fully charged at the bottom of the screen. Sometimes these go in, sometimes they're no more effective than normal shots. There's no rhyme or reason to it, but they do make an impressive 'Whoosh' sound.

FROM time to time a game comes along and all you can do is wonder 'why?'. Why did anyone think that five-a-side football would work as a computer game? Why, when so many 'full size' games fall by the wayside, did anyone think that eight outfield players on a tiny court could ever produce the same satisfaction as the real thing? Why, given that basketball games only work when they allow quick, fluid passing and great off-the-ball movement, did any games designer think it would be a good idea to make passing a non-automatic, directional and length-based frustrating guess-athon. Why, why, why, why, WHY?

In essence, five-a-side is basketball with the feet. Play is kept going not so much by what the player with the ball does, but by the space the players off the ball move in to. Games consist of fast paced passing movements and goals galore. To make a computer game of the event, this is the sort of thing you've at least got to aim for.

The trouble with *Puma* is that the whole act of passing is so difficult you're soon reduced to long and mazey milk rounds, fruitlessly trying to get a good shot in on goal. The first problem is that none of your team-mates will make a run for you, preferring instead to stand still, marked out of the game by their opposite number. Secondly, passes have to be aimed both in terms of direction (the orientation of your man on the ball) and speed (the length of time you hold the pass button). Playing in a ball to feet is the work of many hours of practice and a hefty slice of luck. The failure rate is so high, you soon realise it's more effective to play kick and rush.

"It's hard to know what to hate most."

With the court as small as it is, it's also frustratingly difficult to keep the ball in play. Throw-outs from the keeper are a particular favourite here, with anything other than a throw directly down the pitch normally resulting in the ball bouncing out of play. Couple this with truly awful Americanised know-nothing commentary and keepers who never leak a goal, (except *sometimes* for no discernable reason) and you're presented with so many frustrations, it's hard to know which to hate most.

Total, irredeemable rubbish then? That'll be about the size of it. Why oh why.

JAMES ASHTON

Germany vs Japan. You won't care.

The commentary is especially hateful.

PCGAMER PROFILE

PSS is:
- Fast-paced
- Unique
- Not related to football in any way at all

PSS is not:
- Good enough to be arcade *or* simulation
- Slick enough to impress anyone
- Fun

■ Publisher **Infogrames** ■ Developer **Pixelstorm** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P100, 16Mb RAM, x4 CD, 95Mb disk space, 3Dfx compatible graphics card** ■ Recommended **P200 or better, 32Mb, x8 CD, 95Mb disk space, joypad** ■ Multi-Player **1-10 simultaneous** ■ Web Site **www.pixelstorm.it** ■ Release Date **Out now**

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

FIFA 99 (EA) PCG 64, 90%
The nearest thing the PC has to a definitive football game. Proper number of players too!

NBA Live 99 (EA) PCG 66, 72%
This is the only way that *Puma* could have worked. If you want 5-on-5, stick to the real stuff

PCGAMER
Puma Street Soccer is a dreadful miscalculation of what makes computer footy fun.

38%

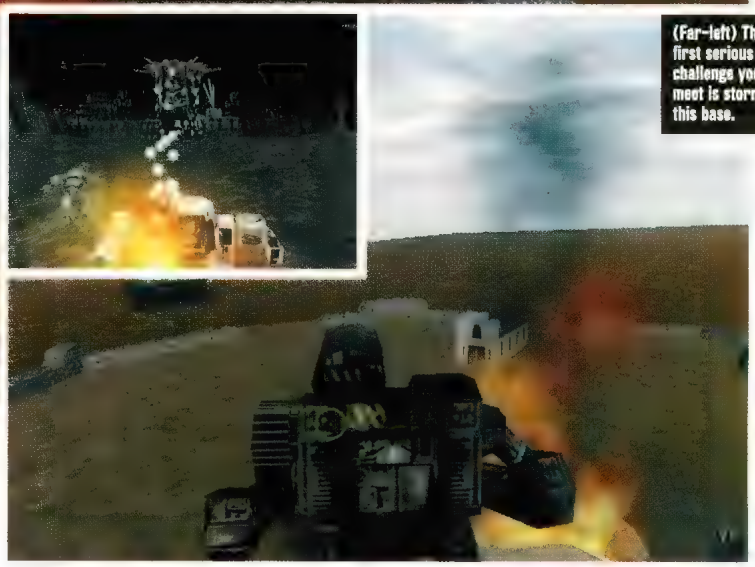
ame of the Year
TOP 100 AWARDS
PC GAMER
NOT FOR THE FAINT HEARTED
http://www.sierrastudios.com
HALF-LIFE
SIERRA
For further information contact: Havas Interactive UK Ltd, Unit 2 Beacontree Plaza, Gillette Way, Reading, Berkshire RG2 0BS Tel: 0118 920 9111
VALVE

GENRE: ACTION/STRATEGY

MECHWARRIOR 3

Why do Mechs eat chilli? Because its Mech-ican food. Sorry.

The Hollywood remake of Ted Hughes' The Iron Man took so many liberties.



(Far-left) The first serious challenge you meet is storming this base.

MECH GCSE REVISION

MechWarrior 1
Never existed. The original game was *MechWarrior 2*, licensed from the FASA RPG of the same name.

MechWarrior 2 Activision
PCG 21, 92%
Described as, "Slick, smooth, playable and challenging."

MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries Activision
PCG 36, 90%
We crowned it "big robot champion". Allowed control of a freelance Mech mercenary.

MechCommander MicroProse
PCG 51, 81%
A change of developer spawned this RTS game set in the Battletech universe.

I AM the God of War. Or he is the God of War and I am a smear upon his titanium boot. It varies. The point is that in *MechWarrior 3*, *someone* is being the God of War. Never has the feeling of indestructibility and almost omnipotent killing potential been conveyed as well as it has here.

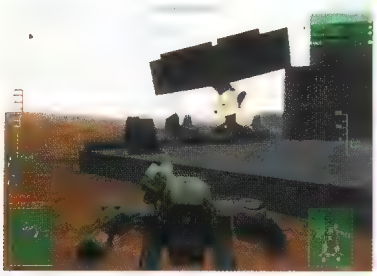
It's a neat coincidence that one of the more powerful Mechs is named Thor. I can't believe that the Norse Thunder God felt more puissant striding across the battlefields of Viking Mythology. Buildings crumble beneath your pounding feet. Civilians mill around, running in terror from your terrible visage. A single burst of autocannon fire tears apart hypertech tanks. You are the God of War until an equally titanic mechanical foe strides defiant onto your radar. Then one must die.

When *MechWarrior 3* is good, it's very, very good. And even at its worse it decimates *Starsiege*. *(But by how much? - A reader, turning the page.)* No! Don't look at the mark yet. Just bear with me. *MechWarrior 3's* story is an unusual one

"When *Mech 3* is good, it's very, very good."

In terms of structure and basic play, *MechWarrior 3* is almost identical to its precursors. It's a 'Sci-Fi simulator', taking an imaginary machine, in this case the giant robotic Mechs, then trying to make it act as it would if it were real. Missions progress in a linear campaign. Interestingly, rather than the general broad thematic sweeps we've seen previously, *Mech 3's* story moves in microscopic detail. Each new task starts where the last ended, with new objectives in regions that were previously outside the mission area. This successfully creates the atmosphere of a slow slog through hostile terrain, every foot gained is an achievement.

For reasons I won't disclose, you start the campaign alone without any of your Lancemates (a Lance being a squad of Mechs). Your survival is due to one of *Mech 3's* innovations: the mobile field base. This trio of mechanical tractors act as your supply train, picking up salvage from your defeated foes and repairing you whenever you wander back for a patch up. But (Boo! Hiss!) your opponents will target the defenceless vehicles and, if they're destroyed, you'll lose a portion of the attractive bric-à-brac you've accumulated. If that happens, you won't be able to redesign your vehicle between battles. *(Redesigns? - A Reader)* Why yes,



DO YOU DO IT IN RED?

In vehicle design, *MechWarrior 3* is teenage technical Lego to *Starsiege's* Duplo. It's a constant battle to create another efficient killing machine. Weighing up the benefits of cooling vents, specifically placed armour or another ammo clip for your autocannon is dangerously compulsive. Also, since you're only surviving on salvage, you're forced to swap armaments around as you run out of the required ammunition. Excitingly then, Mech design proves to be as important a skill as accurate targeting.

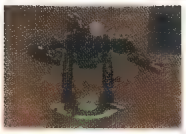
Of course, your designs are only ever really tested in the heat of battle.

Your mobile field base can't actually alter your design mid-battle. A shame.

Hmmm... there appears to have been a few problems with my Masta Killah.

Now there's something you don't see every day.

As well as the full campaign, you can set up a quick battle around whatever specification you desire.



MENU SYSTEM

I mentioned that *Mech 3* is classy. An example? Press escape during play. You expect the usual clumsy menu to appear. In fact the whole scene fades slightly, then is beautifully smeared, turning the scene into an impressionistic picture of your current view. The menu's overlain and the legend 'MechWarrior 3' scrolls slowly from right to left. Frankly, I've played whole games that are less impressive than this minor frippery.

Giant

dear friend. And look! Up there! A box about it. Both the design and the field bases add another welcoming strategic element

The actual hot robot on robot action then? Well your Mechs possess a tank-like rotatable upper body, allowing your firing line to be in a separate direction to the one that your legs are pounding in Concentrating fire upon individual sections of your foe allows either a swift kill or disablement. When fitted with jump packs, you can throw your 50-ton beasts through the air, even crushing opponents when you land. Firing your high energy weapons constantly will overheat your monolithic war machine. So, like *X-Wing Alliance*, we're not exactly seeing many new concepts integrated, but rather further intricacies being explored

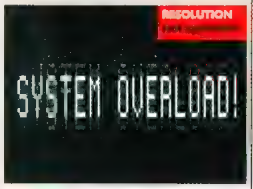
But, as my hyperbolic intro may have suggested, it's *MechWarrior's* ability to utterly convince you that *this is real* which really leaves your mouth gaping. Take the Mechs: their heavy lumbering gait, their awkward limping after taking damage to their legs, the acrobatic swirls traced by a barrage of short-range missiles. Take the terrain: rather than the barren wastes of *Starsiege,* your conflict takes you through heavily built-up regions, full of buildings that collapse as you barge against them and panicking tiny people. Take the strange moments of poetic beauty: the waves lapping romantically against nuclear beaches, tumbleweed rolling across lonely terrain, the strange sensation that sweeps over you after stumbling away from a raging battle only to find yourself

Reflections in the water are a particularly serene touch.

SYSTEM MISER

How *MechWarrior 3* will play on *your* PC.

■ Test System **P166, 32Mb RAM, Voodoo1 (4Mb)**



VERDICT: The struggle of making the picture appear was too much. Even the menu system was sluggish. Erk.

■ Test System **P266, 32Mb RAM, Voodoo2 (12Mb)**

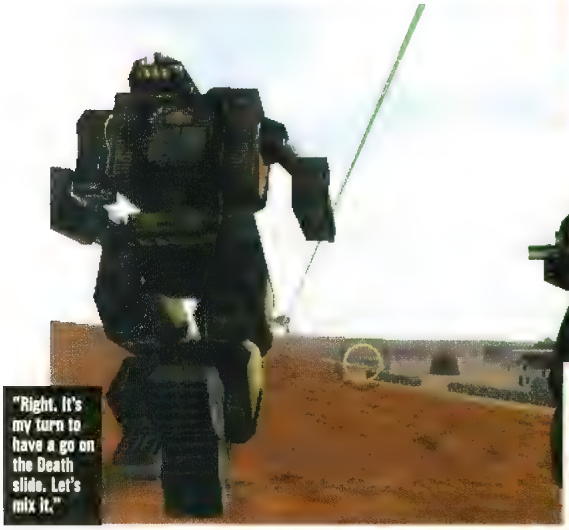
VERDICT: Eminently playable. There's hardly any difference in performance between this system and the PII 350.

ZOOM ZOOM SHAKE THE ROOM

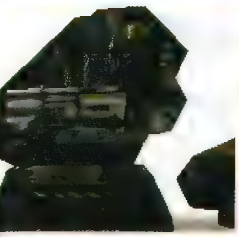
In the videogame world, zooming scopes are this year's equivalent of street-fashion's overlarge combat trousers. Basically, if you haven't got them (erm) you can't listen to the Beastie Boy album anymore. Or rather you can't shoot people accurately at a considerable distance. While sniper tactics aren't that important in *MechWarrior* (Imagine a giant robot sitting in a tree with twigs on its head. Exactly.), shooting at vulnerable areas certainly is.

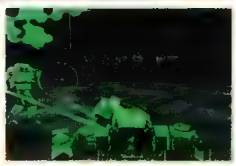
My target of choice is the right shoulder. The reasons for my choice are secret. Fear them.

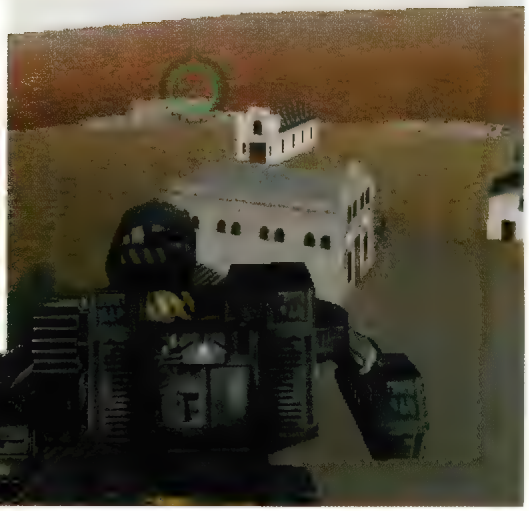
Different Mechs actually have different shaped sights, adding another convincing element to play.

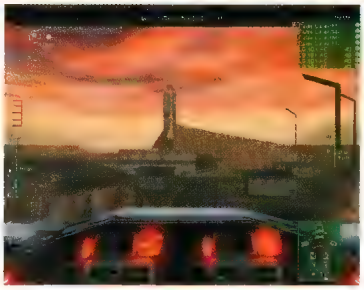


"Right. It's my turn to have a go on the Death slide. Let's mix it."









PCGAMER PROFILE

MechWarrior 3 is
- A detailed pseudo-simulator
- A thoughtful shooter
- Slow paced

MechWarrior 3 is not
- Quick, accessible violence
- A tale of tortured romance in the Baltic states
- Going to get a Nobel for AI

⇨ relaxing beside a gently tumbling waterfall. Or take the underground tunnels. Or the.

Criticism? Oh all right then. Although *MechWarrior* is door-to-door-salesman slick in virtually every department, it's a little bit wobbly when it comes to AI. Surely when you've created such intricate scenery, you should make equal effort to ensure all the protaganists can negotiate it? Unfortunately, enemy Mechs are sometimes outfoxed by the sheer animal cunning of... a steep hill. Somehow they just short circuit and can spend hours bashing their noses against its earthen slopes. But once their metal nervous system gets the message through, they're quick to close in, making for competent, if slightly predictable, foes. I immediately

"Door-to-door salesman slick in virtually every department.".

noticed that while they *do* concentrate their fire, they only ever aim against your torso. If you strip your legs of defence and weld the metal sheets to your body, your survivability skyrockets. The final chink in their armour is that their threat radius (the range at which they'll target you) is a little small. So, on occasion, you can edge forward, and trigger each Mech individually, destroying them piecemeal.

Which is a shame, because it's always disappointing to find yourself abusing the loopholes in the AI rather than taking on an opponent on equal terms. But virtually every computer game since *Space Invaders* has committed similar crimes, it's just such an unwelcome jolt in *MechWarrior* because the rest of the time it's so utterly believable.

This latest dose of metal moonsuit antics has so nearly established the robot bashing genre as the irresistible force we know it must become. It'll probably take just one last push from Intel's processor peddlers and we'll have everything we've ever wanted.

JAMES ASHTON

■ Publisher **Hasbro** ■ Developer **MicroProse/Zipper Interactive** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P166, 32Mb, 90Mb HD** ■ Recommended **P200, 64Mb, 90Mb HD, 3D card** ■ Graphics Accelerator **Direct 3D** ■ Multi-Player **Internet, LAN, modem** ■ Web Address **www.mechwarrior3.com** ■ Release Date **June**

PCGAMER

A towering game that walks as tall as any Mech. Heavy metal has never been so cool.

90%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Terra Nova (Looking Glass) PCG29, 91%
Small men in suits, rather than large suits. But has the best jetpacks in the world

Starsiege Universe (Sierra) PCG 70, 80%
Remember, this is a dual package. The robo-control *Starsiege* part would only have achieved 70% alone

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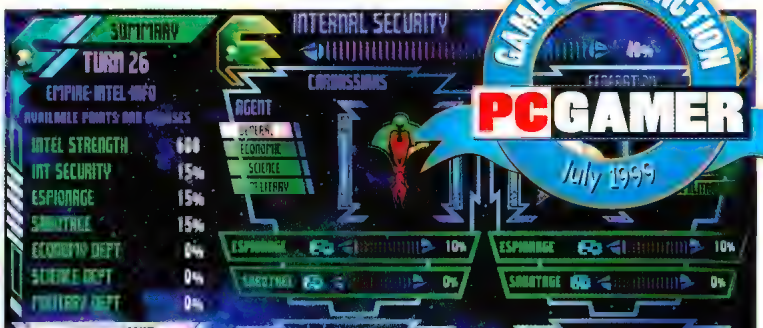
GENRE: STRATEGY

STAR TREK: BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION

MicroProse conclude their Star Trek era with flourish.



Hmm. Nice architecture. Hope you don't mind if I bomb your planet, invade with a large military force, displace your populace and move in myself.

Trust no-one, especially the damn pastie-heads.

PC GAMER PROFILE

Star Trek BOTF is
- A heavy-weight simulation
- With turn-based 3D space combat
- Slow and methodical to play

Star Trek BOTF is not
- Pretty
- Simple
- Quick

THE success (and eventual failure) of MicroProse as a developer throws up two consistent themes, and *Star Trek: Birth Of The Federation* is a great example of both. The Sid Meier-founded company did, of course, make its name with the finest strategy and simulation games ever written. Perversely, it then went on to release them all at least a year late, leaving most of them looking outdated and inaccessible. Thankfully, although their final Trek game, *BOTF*, exhibits these weaknesses, it emerges triumphant despite its handicaps.

It's long been a dream for Trekkies to have Star Trek's Alpha Quadrant to tinker with and this is exactly what *BOTF* sets out to achieve. The founding of the Federation, exploration of the surrounding space and diplomatic contacts with Earth's neighbours lies at the heart of Star Trek, but until now has never been adequately portrayed. *BOTF* has fixed this in one fell swoop, bringing the incredibly engrossing and balanced Trek universe to your PC and then gifting you all the power you could want to completely screw it up.

You begin *BOTF* with a single outpost in a huge, black void. Gradual exploration with spaceships reveals the surrounding space, complete with stars, planets, hazards, wormholes and, of course, other races. As leader of either the Human, Klingon, Ferengi, Cardassian or Romulan races, your aim is to exploit these varied resources to protect and expand your empire.

This is no easy task, however, as a state of distrust which makes Israelis and Palestinians seem like best chums exists between most races. However, and this is what marks *BOTF* as a game worthy of special attention, it's diplomacy and not war, which is mainly required for success. Diplomacy naturally takes time and money and other races are more likely to respect your wishes if you are powerful, but to become dominant you need these other races to earn money and might.

Therefore, *BOTF* becomes a kind of galactic night-club simulator, with you and your pretend best-mate pitching for the same top girls (races) while wearing the finest fabrics (planets). Naturally the suitor who's most charming (offers security) and pretends to like the same bands (intelligence corps) will win (get laid), but if that's not you, there's always the option of getting lagered up, smacking your rival in the face (military might) and enslaving them in your cave by force. Well, there ought to be.

"A kind of galactic night-club simulator."

Unlike a club, there's little question that deep within *BOTF* there's a spreadsheet governing all the inter-racial actions, but the skill by which this is disguised is admirable. Each planet produces resources for your

SYSTEM MISER

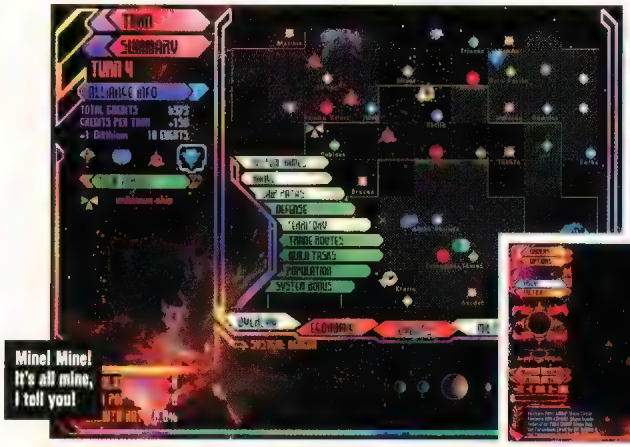
How *Star Trek: BOTF* will play on *your* PC.

■ Test System **P166, 32Mb RAM, Voodoo1 (4Mb), 33.6k modem**

VERDICT: Occasionally a little slow, but only infringes on your fun marginally. It's a strategy game. Speed isn't critical.

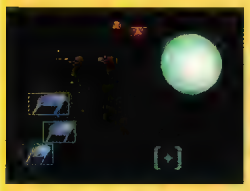
■ Test System **P200, 64Mb RAM, Voodoo1 (4Mb) 56k modem**

VERDICT: Perfectly fine and pretty much identical to our review machine. As quick and speedy as this sort of thing gets.

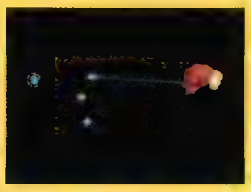


"READY THE PROTON TORPEDOES."

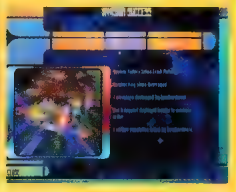
Sometimes diplomacy is a big girl's option. So construct a 'peacekeeping' armada and go looking for trouble. After all, if you spend all those points on weapons research you might as well use it.



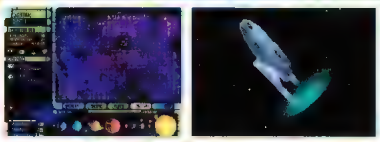
Declaring war on someone will affect your population positively or negatively. It's important to harry your opponents and destroy undefended troop transports and light ships.



If you're determined to reject their peace demands you might as well press the attack. Slowly go for their homeworld by fighting your way through ships and outposts.



When you get there, you'll need a few battleships to bombard the planet and a troop carrier to capture it. This Ferengi planet is now in the Federation. Bwa-ha-ha!



WARNING

Your likelihood of enjoying *ST:BOTF* is directly proportional to your Star Trek interest and knowledge. If open spaces scare you then look somewhere else, but if your blood boils when people say 'The Great Shat' then this is for you. Test your knowledge in the quiz below – 3/5 is the pass mark.

Quiz Trek

1) What is a starship?

2) The Tribbles dislike the Klingons – True or False

3) The Enterprise was built at the Utopia Planitia Fleet Yards above which planet?

4) What is the Normal Range of a Transporter in kilometres?

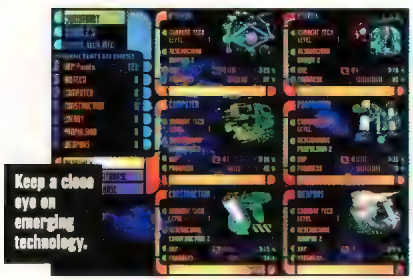
5) How 'Big' was Gene Roddenberry?

Answers

1. Don't play *BOTF*.
2. True
3. Mars
4. 40,000km
5. Not as big as George Lucas.

Universal

empire, new planets and systems can be terraformed and close alliances with existing civilisations brings their expertise under your control. Along with the five major races and oodles of non affiliated races populating your variously shaped and sized map at the start. By courting enough of these clever people using money and trade, your own research and production are augmented and you'll slowly gain a technological edge (and thereby power) over your rivals.



Technologies are slowly discovered by building labs on your planet using your industry, but each planetary improvement requires workers to support it and they require food. So, a balanced spread of terraforming, farms, factories, intelligence centres, shipyards, and so on is necessary for long term success. And when I say long term, stretch l-o-n-g out as far as you can because this is a huge, deep and immensely time consuming turn based game.

The other four races obviously have the same idea and will stop at little to see what you are up to. To reflect this, *BOTF* has a huge and detailed intelligence screen, through which you can allocate resources to infiltrate other races and protect your own from similar attack. There is also a completely separate, turn-based 3D ship to ship dogfighting screen for when the enemy (or you) wants to take things further.

The number of possible actions and combinations is awesome and they fit together superbly, but there is a twist; and it is this: to play your chosen race effectively, you must adapt your style. For example, Romulans make great use of intelligence, the Federation is good for empire building and the Ferengi are always rich through trade. As opponents, the AI is good enough to differentiate them but you'll need to exploit their strengths and weaknesses

Don't even think about embarking on the chase unless you can see it through, or you might feel cheated. When you have a large empire the pace is very slow and minor mistakes can take many turns to rectify. However, if you can endure this you're in for a treat. **JAMES FLYNN**

■ Publisher **Hasbro** ■ Developer **MicroProse** ■ Price **£40** ■ Minimum System **P166, 32Mb RAM, x4 CD-ROM, 158Mb HD** ■ Recommended **P200, 32Mb RAM** ■ Graphics Accelerator **None** ■ Mult. Player **modem, LAN, Internet, up to 4 players** ■ Web Address **www.hasbro.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Master Of Orion 2 PCG 37, 90%
The world's favourite space strategy game. Old but still hugely popular

Star Wars: Supremacy PCG 56, 71%
Roughly the same deal as *BOTF* in the Star Wars universe but not as well executed

PC GAMER

Deep, subtle and rewarding, but you'll need months rather than weeks to master it.

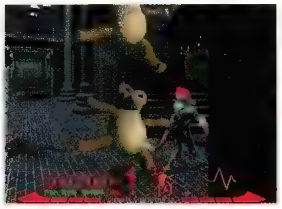
88%

GENRE: SHOOT-'EM-UP

ED HUNTER

£24.95 for a 20-track Iron Maiden album with free PC game. Or is it the other way around? It's still a turd no matter which shoe you get it on.

The levels are dingy and the enemies appear from nowhere out of the dark.



Into the asylum and the terror knows no limit. There are old men wandering around with tenon saws.

PC GAMER PROFILE

Ed Hunter is.
- A simple shoot-'em-up...
- With awful sound and graphics
- Utterly undeserving of your attention

Ed Hunter is not
- Original or entertaining
- Deep or challenging
- Even as good as an Iron Maiden concert

WHILE I was playing Iron Maiden's House Of The Dead-style shoot-'em-up, the bloke from the flat upstairs hammered on my door and asked me to turn the music down. It wasn't because he couldn't stand the strains of the 20 top Maiden tunes that provide the accompaniment to Ed Hunter because I had turned those off long ago. No, the chump was objecting to the banging sound of Gangster Tripping, high-volume Fat Boy Slim providing the only antidote to the searing gameplay pain being inflicted on my face, eyes and ears.

Back at Maiden HQ, it must have seemed a wizard wheeze to have a real-live (or at least, a real-recorded) Iron Maiden track to accompany each shoot-to-thrill level. Sound as a pound of flesh that idea But when the songs last about four minutes each and a level drags on for at least twice as long, what looked perfect on the drawing board in practice becomes the heavy meta version of Chinese water torture

ronically for a game inspired by one of the oldest bands around, *Ed Hunter* is one of the weakest games we've heard since Infocom packed its text adventure bags. Apart from the repetitive music that bears no relation to what's happening in the game, the sound effects are absolutely abysmal. Either the developers have been deafened by standing too close to the speakers at Maiden concerts or they couldn't be arsed to send the office monkey up the road to the sample shop where he could get a halfway convincing gunshot sound

f it seems like I've been gabbing on about the sound rather a ot, that's because I have Part y I figured it should've been a pretty important aspect of the game, what with its headbanger's heritage and all, but mostly I wanted to put off talking about the game itself. But here goes

Ed Hunter is a game of such monumental ineptitude it leaves a stain on the gaming globe so big that it can be seen from space. It is a leaden, plodding, tedious, linear shoot-'em-up that neither challenges your dexterity nor your mental faculties. You have no control over the pace of the game or where you move; you simply point and click to shoot. Its utter lack of originality and visual competence only

"Leaden, plodding, tedious."

serves to rub mountains of salt into the already gaping wound that used to be your pride in owning a PC

And above it all you hear a hollow clunk. It's the sound of your jaw hitting the floor in utter disbelief that in 1999 a game can be quite this bad – and still get released Syntnetic Dimensions and Iron Maiden shouldn't hang their heads in shame they should just hang.

RICHARD LONGHURST

PLAYING FOR KEEPS

The twenty top tunes on *Ed Hunter's* two other CDs were voted for by Maiden fans who logged on to *www.ironmaiden.com* in December. We hope very much that they enjoy the game, though find it difficult to believe that they'll be pleased their favourite band's name has been soiled by such an execrable emission.

At intervals, you get to choose which way to go, though it ultimately makes no difference.

■ Publisher **EMI** ■ Developer **Synthetic Dimensions** ■ Price **£25** ■ Minimum System **P120, 16Mb RAM, x4 CD-ROM, 206Mb HD** ■ Recommended **P200, 32Mb, x8 CD-ROM, light gun** ■ Graphics Accelerator **None** ■ Multi Player **None** ■ Web Address **www.edhunter.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

PC GAMER

For a moment we were going to give it 10 but then we recalled that dreadful soundtrack.

9%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Boiling your own head Facial and cranial scarring takes less time to heal than the mental scars inflicted by *Ed Hunter.*

Dying Doesn't cost as much, far more enjoyable and you might get to see what hell is like for real.

GENRE: TURN BASED SPACE STRATEGY

MALKARI

Fighting it out in space again, but this bunch of asteroids sure doesn't look like *Alpha Centauri* to me.

I always hated the Krypton factor, but then again I have only one eye.

Design your own ships according to your researched technologies.

That's what we like to see. A nice co-operative guild. It will never last.

VIVE LA DIFFERENCE

There are five races in Malkari, and Interactive Magic have done a great job of making them all play differently. For example, the Blue Talon Corps are a race of Raiders who don't bother with their own constructions (they just nick everyone else's), while the Emerald Combine are all about micro-management. Forget about early combat and focus on building a powerful economy.

Malarkey

THE citizens of Mestor prepare for disaster. In the process they diversify into five guilds, each consisting of eight chapters. In the nick of time they manage to store all personalities as engrams and develop scientific banks to house them and the technology to grow new bodies and equipment to build anew. No mean feat, we're sure you'll agree.

Catastrophe strikes in the form of a rogue star smashing into the Malkari solar system. When the dust settles it's time to wake up the troops and start battling for dominance of 150 asteroids. This is where you step in, as head of one of the chapters

If the story-line doesn't put you off, the first few hours of play very well might It takes grim determination and a devotion to the cause to plough on through the confusing mess of the game's presentation Well maybe that's a bit extreme, but the thing is there *is* a decent game buried in here somewhere if only you've got the patience to find it

Malkari is a complex blend of resource management, combat and politics, utilising a simultaneous turn-based engine, which fuses together a host of novel ideas. The interface struggles to cope with the amount of information buried within the game and the number of things to do, but it's hard to dismiss it out of hand, especially as it's difficult to see any other way of shoehorning everything in any better. This is one serious strategy game

"Difficult to know what's going on."

Let's start with the map. A group of 150 asteroids are there to be conquered and you start off with control of one. Trouble is, there are two stars and these asteroids are in orbit around one or other or both, all moving at different speeds. This is a great idea, which adds wealth to the strategies and planning required, but makes it difficult to know what is going on at first

You can design your own ships according to key components that you have researched. The guilds all have different attributes and each chapter within a guild can select different proficiencies. Combat, which looks initially like a point and-attack process, turns out to be dependent on a complex battle plan, which you can customise for each ship. There is no diplomacy between enemy guilds, but the chapters all vote for who they want to be Imperator, meaning that you might need to turn on your own allies at some point, or shout "Interregnum" and side with loyal, or renegade, bands within your guild

So, not for the fainthearted, but the game's complexity, combined with its 40-player on-line capability, could see this one challenging *Stars!* for the On-line Space Emperor's Game Award. **JASON WESTON**

A built-in system for adding your own notes is necessary to keep track of what's going on.

PC GAMER PROFILE

Malkari is
- Complex
- Difficult
- Worth persevering with

Malkari is not
- Light relief
- As frightening as it first seems
- Going to win any beauty contests

■ Publisher **Interactive Magic** ■ Developer **In-house** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P133, 16Mb RAM, Win95/98, x4 CD-ROM** ■ Recommended **P166, 32Mb RAM** ■ Graphics Accelerator **None** ■ Multi-Player **40-player LAN, Internet, PBEM** ■ Web Address **www.imagicgames.co.uk** ■ Release Date **Out now**

PC GAMER Like a dose of trepanning it will make your brain hurt, but you'll feel better for it in the long run. **79%**

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Ascendancy (Virgin) PCG 22, 89%
Complex strategy blended with intuitive interface. A tad dated nowadays.

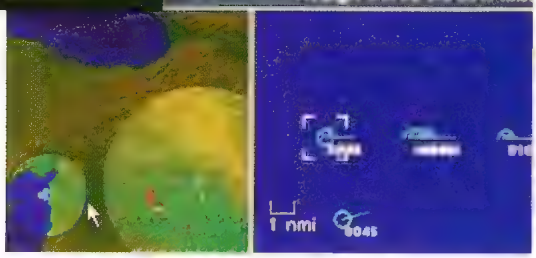
Master Of Orion 2 (MicroProse) PCG 37, 90%
Like building a tower out of playing cards. Well that's what we said at the time, anyway.

GENRE: REAL-TIME STRATEGY WARGAME

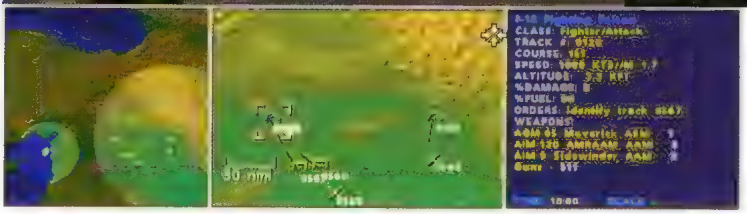
FLEET COMMAND

The joyous, real-time militarism of *Command & Conquer* meets the extensively researched accuracy of *Harpoon* naval warfare. With added 3D to make everything look nice.

The combination of 3D graphics and challenging tactical planning make *Fleet Command* irresistible to the veteran wargamer.



The 3D window allows you to watch the results of your orders and actions.



BRITANNIA RULES THE WAVES?

Plundering its militaristic info from Jane's Fighting Ships, *Fleet Command* simulates a selection of vessels from 16 world navies, flotillas that range from the huge and well-equipped (the US has an awesome display of firepower and technology) to the half-decent (a round of applause please for the British Navy).

FOR those of you who demand a little more hyper-realism with your strategy, EA have cleverly applied the encyclopedic, rivet-perfect knowledge of their Jane's Defence licence to real-time wargaming. Imagine the click-and-drag beauty of *Command & Conquer* meshed with the über-anal military detail of something more stuffy and traditional like *Harpoon*, and you're on the right track.

The tag 'strategy wargame' has often smacked of hex squares, movement points and strange little dingbats that are supposed to be planes. *Harpoon*, undoubtedly the best naval simulator, felt impenetrable and looked immensely dull. Where's the fun in watching a circular symbol (a surface ship) and launching a half-circular symbol (an aircraft) to attack an upside down half diamond symbol (a submarine)?

The battle around the Falklands intensifies with strike aircraft tangling with Argentinean Super Etendard jets and surface ships.

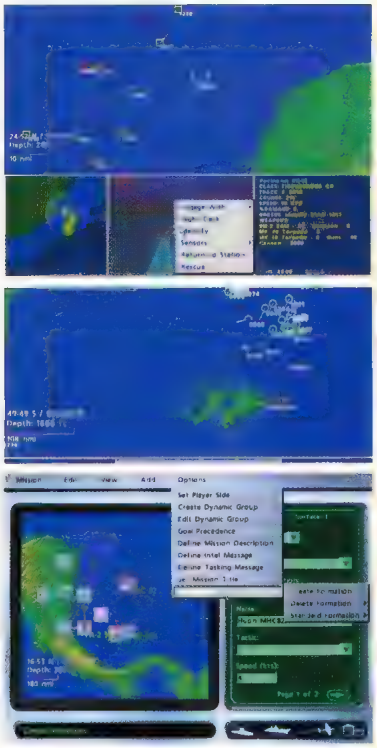
"Impeccably designed and neatly realised."

Mindful perhaps, of the fact that lots of people buy real time strategy titles and only a handful stretch their PC's power with seasoned, turn-based clunkers, *Fleet Command* brings the traditional, realistically designed wargame up to date. Admittedly, a large wedge of game time is spent watching tiny diamond symbols moving slowly towards other tiny diamond symbols. But with its real time edge, and the addition of the sort of 3D graphics that have characterised EA's other Jane's themed games, the result is an accessible tactical challenge that allows you to indulge in 'gunboat diplomacy' in a variety of world hot spots. Teddy Roosevelt coined the phrase, "Walk softly but carry a big stick." *Fleet Command* takes this idea to heart, handing you a big stick that comes in the shape of 93, 970-ton, nuclear-powered aircraft carriers, missile-stuffed frigates, fighter aircraft and hunter- killer submarines.

The four tutorials (hand-holding you through sample sea and air ops), the 34 single missions, and the four tough campaigns all lead to the same info overloaded main game screen. This is split into four main areas. The biggest of these contains the overhead map, the blue battleground where your armada of high-tech circular symbols will trade radar-guided, semicircle-shaped pot-shots. You bark orders to your units via this screen, zooming in to distinguish one from another, then right-clicking to set a course, fire a missile, activate the radar, launch an aircraft, or whatever the specific unit is capable of.

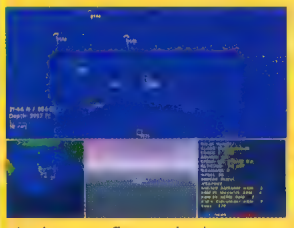
Below this main map screen is an overall view of the combat area (allowing you to quickly highlight certain areas) which is complemented by an information window (detailing a unit's weapons availability, damage, course, speed, etc.) and a 3D window.

It may be little more than a cosmetic



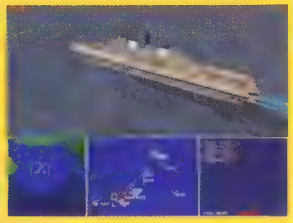
GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY

The basics of *Fleet Command* are ridiculously easy to grasp. Locate the enemy; identify them; shoot them. Repeat until victorious.

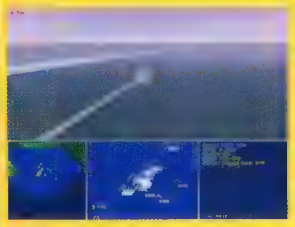


1) When your fleet's radar detects unknown contacts, you can't fire until you have dispatched an aircraft to identify them.

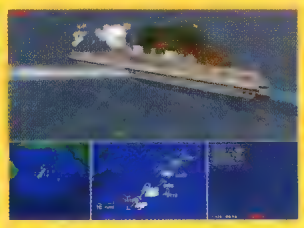
2) The yellow half-square has now been tagged as an enemy Sea Harrier. Its symbol changes to red and you can open fire.



3) The Sea Harriers are being launched from the nearby Hermes-class Viraat aircraft carrier. Identifying this allows you to conduct an air strike



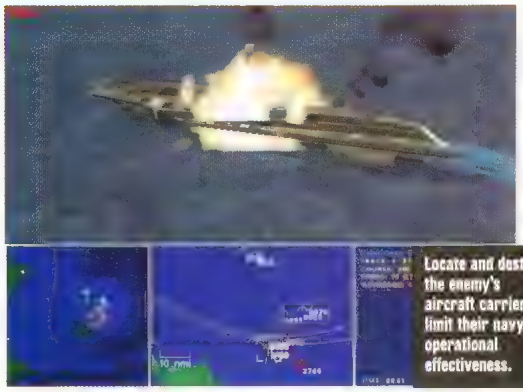
4) Launching eight FA/18 Hornets in a dedicated strike wave, they fire a volley of anti-ship missiles at the aircraft carrier.



5) The carrier's limited armaments can't shoot down all the missiles and many slip through the defensive fire.

6) Continual pounding has limited the carrier's combat effectiveness. Its deck is heavily damaged and its speed reduced to zero. Now for its support ship...

Afloat



Locate and destroy the enemy's aircraft carriers to limit their navy's operational effectiveness.

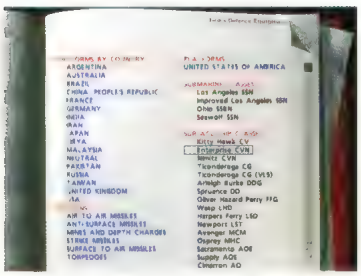
extra, but being able to view the results of your orders in 3D is responsible for a large chunk of *Fleet Command's* appeal. With the ability to toggle the 3D graphics between its small default window and the larger map window, the mechanised rage of modern battle is dramatically played out. FA/18 Hornets strike at enemy surface ships, Sea King helicopters pluck downed pilots from the sea, Ticonderoga-class cruisers blast tomahawk missiles at distance X's (designating a land target) often hundreds of miles away. Better still you can toggle the 3D view to follow key incidents (missile launches, aircraft landings, attacks, etc.), or 'tether' it to an individual unit. In this way you can watch your missiles pound an enemy aircraft carrier until it sinks slowly and satisfyingly beneath the waves

It's all impeccably designed, exhaustively researched (unit stats and photos are included in an on-line compendium), and neatly realised. That's not to say, however, that *Fleet Command* is without its niggles and problems

Surprisingly for a game of this complexity and depth, the manual skimps over many of the game's details, preferring to devote a large chunk to the functions of the mission editor. The manual tells you what to do, but not how to do it, so you're forced to fiddle and experiment to learn how to effectively use sonar-dipping helicopters, SAM-jamming EA 6B Prowlers, and submarines. It's an annoyance, as unlike resource-gathering, unit building RTS games like *C&C*, you can't replace any units that are lost in battle. Once the enemy has sunk your aircraft carrier, for example, it stays sunk. You can't harvest a fictional resource and build another one

Finally, like real military engagements, the action in *Fleet Command* can slow to a crawl. Yes, the excitement is juiced up by FMV snippets of gung-ho rhetoric. Yes, the challenge of the game is to keep track of the hundreds of objects that eventually clog the map screen - planes, ships, incoming missiles, outgoing missiles, helicopters, neutral ships, neutral aircraft, and so on But, it's worth remembering that you are essentially performing an aggressive job of sea-based air traffic control, and there tends to be a lot of waiting around as your tiny units cover the large distances between targets. *Fleet Command* may masquerade as an arcade-style wargame, but it lacks the instant action and non stop pressure of its fictional rivals

DEAN EVANS



PCGAMER PROFILE

Fleet Command is
- Comprehensive
- Extensively researched
- Attractively presented and designed

Fleet Command is not
- *C&C* with the US sixth fleet
- Fast-paced and non-stop action
- Very pretty

■ Publisher **EA** ■ Developer **Jane's Combat Simulations** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P200, 32Mb RAM, x4 CD, 276Mb HD** ■ Recommended **PII 300, 64Mb RAM, 3D card** ■ Graphics Accelerator **Direct 3D** ■ Multi-Player **8-player LAN or Internet play** ■ Web Address **www.janes.ea.com** ■ Release Date **June**

PCGAMER A traditional turn-based naval wargame with a real-time twist and 3D-accelerated graphics. **78%**

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Warzone 2100 (Eidos) PCG 68, 90%
C&C-style wargaming as futuristic battle tanks and troops clash on far-flung alien battlefields.

Pacific General (SSI) PCG 49, 76%
Fleet operations and naval strategy with a turn based flavour and set during World War II

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GENRE: TURN BASED STRATEGY

IMPERIALISM II

Aldous Huxley got it wrong. There's nothing 'brave' about the New World. They're just a bunch of savages; ripe for conquest.

Whoever built that wall wants shooting, which is exactly what's happening.

Stylised graphics are clear and functional, despite lacking any real excitement.

After conquering the historical map, there are random and custom challenges to face.

PC GAMER PROFILE

Imperialism II is
- An opportunity to achieve world domination
- Easier to play than the original
- Harder to win than the original

Imperialism II is not
- Real time
- 3D-accelerated
- A complete dud because of this

Majestic

GOING against the grain of most sequels, *Imperialism II* takes you back in time from the original placing you in control of one of the world's major powers in the 1500s. Your task is to discover and explore the New World and in the process achieve domination of Europe. The nations you can choose between are England, France, Holland, Spain, Portugal and, wait for it... Sweden.

The original game (PCG 49, 78%) was well-received and respected for its turn-based strategic challenge, but failed to win any awards largely because of its clumsy interface. While much of the look and feel remains intact, many of the creases have been smoothed out and we're left with an altogether more polished effort.

Imperialism II is a game of managing your economy, researching new technologies, exploiting new territories and political intrigue. As such, it would be easy for a tide of micro-management to drown you. Fortunately, this isn't the case; many of the more laborious tasks are automated, leaving a well balanced selection of choices which all feel relevant to your eventual success or failure. This automation unfortunately seems responsible for one of the game's major irritations: naval domination doesn't prevent your opponent from moving his armies, making ports less vulnerable to blockade and siege tactics.

"Sedate in pace, yet complex and rewarding."

What initially seems to be a complex diplomatic model suffers from some peculiarities to the system which mean that when multiple alliances are set up they become frustrating and leave you with limited options. Military encounters are well handled, with the game descending into tactical battle screens when the need arises. However, the maps and battles become repetitive and tiresome over time, which makes the auto-resolve feature welcome.

Imperialism II is sedate in pace, yet complex and rewarding. But will it appeal to you? Well, the box portrays a stern-faced man sporting a full, healthy beard. Need we say more?

JASON WESTON

(Above-left) Is this an Armada I see before me? (Above-right) Why struggle to resist the devilish temptation to research deficit spending?

PLAYING FOR KEEPS

Imperialism II covers over 300 years of history from the 16th to the 19th century. There are 40 military and civilian units and 100 technologies from the period, which you need to develop and evolve in order to keep up with your opponents.

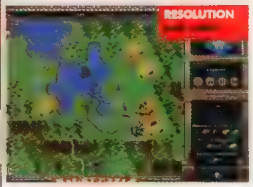
SYSTEM MISER

How *Imperialism II* will play on *your* PC.

■ Test System **P100, 16Mb RAM, no 3D card installed**

VERDICT: Creaks and judders quite a bit when scrolling the map, but it's still just about playable.

■ Test System **P166, 32Mb RAM, Voodoo1 (4Mb)**



VERDICT: Perfect performance, but the Voodoo card is obviously surplus to requirements for this game.

■ Publisher **SSI** ■ Developer **Frog City** ■ Price **£25** ■ Minimum System **P100, 16Mb RAM, x4 CD-ROM, 110Mb HD space** ■ Recommended **P166, 32Mb RAM** ■ Graphics Accelerator **None** ■ Multi-Player **Modem, LAN, Internet, up to 6 players** ■ Web Address **www.ssionline.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Anno 1602 (Infogrames) PCG 63, 81%
A peaceful alternative to empire building, with the emphasis on happy people.

Colonization (MicroProse) PCG 12, 93%
Look around the bargain bins for this gem, which handles exactly the same period.

PC GAMER

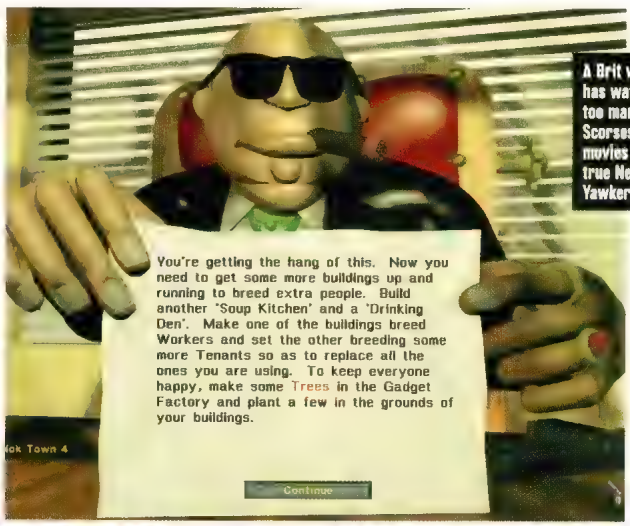
Refreshing addition to a genre which is largely dominated by Sid Meier's various games.

84%

GENRE: REAL TIME STRATEGY

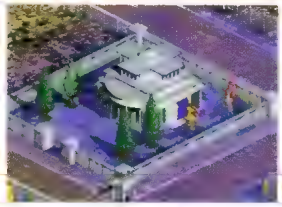
STREET WARS: CONSTRUCTOR UNDERWORLD

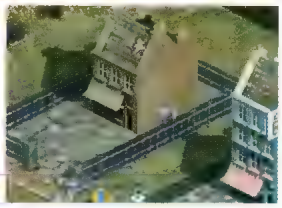
I'm gonna make you an offer you can't refuse. Read this review, and one day you can do me a favour in return.


You're getting the hang of this. Now you need to get some more buildings up and running to breed extra people. Build another 'Soup Kitchen' and a 'Drinking Den'. Make one of the buildings breed Workers and set the other breeding some more Tenants so as to replace all the ones you are using. To keep everyone happy, make some Trees in the Gadget Factory and plant a few in the grounds of your buildings.
Continue

A Brit who has watched too many Scorsese movies or a true New Yawker?

Tiny cameos like this police blimp arresting a wise guy get lost in the confusion of *Street Wars*.





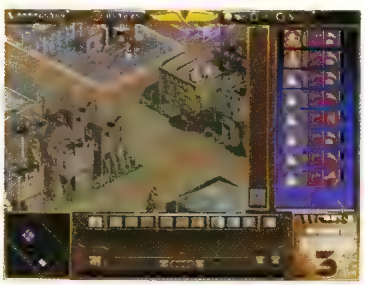
GRAVEYARD OF THE SOUL

How many people would murder if they knew they would get away with it?

Hopefully, very few. But how many would bother to murder in a computer game if they knew they probably wouldn't? None. So why does *Street Wars* include a cemetery, where you must laboriously bury your victims to avoid the cops? Because it *sounded* like a nice idea.

THERE'S a schizophrenic restaurant near my house that gets a makeover every season. But whether it's 'Billabong' (serving pornographic kangaroo tails), 'What Price Rice?!' (a zany re-evaluation of the maggot of the vegetable world) or 'Belladonna' (fittingly, a moniker for Deadly Nightshade), the establishment starves without customers.

Number 210 should be a dentist or a Post Office, but on some council plan it's a restaurant. I don't quite know what *Street Wars: Constructor Underworld* should be, but as a computer game about property developers-cum-gangsters it's a dog's dinner. The menu is unappealing, the main course cold and over-elaborate, and if you stick around for desserts, you'll get yours



Refuse

Things start badly when you notice chunks of *Constructor* (PCG 47, 85%) plonked straight into the melange. In *Constructor*, rival property magnates fought to establish a real-estate empire while pitting their more undesirable residents against each other. Half this game has been ported right into *Street Wars*. But now it's rival 'neighbourhood' magnates with phony Italian-American accents that battle for Don Trump status.

Constructor was flawed because although the premise of Wimpey and Barret sending around the squatters seemed entertaining, it was nearly impossible to maintain your estates while fighting off the myriad traumas thrown at you, not least of which was the interface. *Street Wars* is worse, not only because it is hard to maintain your estates while fighting traumas and the interface, but also because the developers should have learned their lesson the first time.

The underworld has presumably been half-heartedly employed as a step away from *Constructor*'s class-based British humour, a

sop to the yanks. Think Mafia, though, and you think sharp suits, drugs, ghettos and the evil lurking beneath an apparently thriving society. Few would imagine Marlon Brando vetting obviously British tenants, ordering about workers from *Constructor* who now talk like schoolboy Italians or making a

There's a lot going on here, but, like an Ant Farm, you need to study it for days.

That indigo hue marks my area of influence. Not very tough at all.

THE MODEST CONS

Your tenants and the bizarrely named 'Gadget Factory' are great examples of why *Street Wars* is so difficult to play. You're supposed to be a gangster, right? So why do you have to put up with moaning requests by tenants for trees or subway stations? Surely the game should be more about torching the place if the residents don't pay up?

To upgrade your properties and keep owners happy, you need to make stuff in the Gadget Factory. This means calling in workers, paying for production to begin and sometimes searching for suitable tenants for your up-rated properties. It's not impossible to master. It's just one of many overly obtuse systems you have to grapple with.

Al Pacino wouldn't stand for this, you know.

'f***ing big oven' for his Soup Kitchen. Equally, gangster violence brings to mind the operatic hits of The Godfather, not the bumbling melees of *Street Wars*. And, Joe Pesci aside, gangsters are rarely a laughing matter; but in truth *Street Wars* has little to worry about on that score

The gangsters in *Street Wars* look exactly like they have been wandered into an existing game about property development, which of course they have. But maybe *Street Wars* isn't actually about property development? Aren't the cement factories, diners, cemeteries and other pre fabs ported in from *Constructor* simply analogous to the barracks and research labs of *C&C*? well, no. Because, unlike your typical RTS buildings, *Street Wars'* structures are a pain in the neck to maintain and are a sitting target for attack. They're the focus of your attention

Now, even positive reviews of *Constructor* pointed out how hard it was to play. If anything, *Street Wars* is harder.

"It drains your will to live."

Basically, at any instant, you'll survey a scene of such chaos that it drains your will to live Tenants will be whinging. Amateurish FMV will threaten to make an unwanted appearance. Unsavoury elements will be wandering around, poised to blow up something that took 20 mouse-clicks to get working. And there's no real defence against them except to spot them in time to send in your boys for a little chat

But your boys are getting massacred on a nearby estate because you forgot them for an instant or because they've followed a previous adversary home. So you attempt to get your manual workers to duff the enemy up. But even if successful, your reward will be empty factories and unfinished plots of land because you've forgotten to send each back to his previous job, one by tedious one. If you can even remember all those jobs, that is

One almost sympathises with the developers. On paper, you might imagine a scene of delightful mania. But the key is control. Even when you've mastered the laborious interface, you never feel in control Why must you build every shop, house and factory? A straightforward fix would be *SimCity*-style zones that developed autonomously to create a playground for would-be hoodlums, rather than a playpen for PC-owning masochists

Anyone could enjoy a life of crime in *SimCity*, given the chance. But few will think it pays in *Street Wars*

OWAIN BENNALLACK

PC GAMER PROFILE

Street Wars is
- A nice idea
- Occasionally funny
- Challenging and difficult

Street Wars is not
- *SimCity* meets The Godfather
- Easy
- Fun to play

■ Publisher **Infogrames** ■ Developer **Studio 3** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P166, 16Mb RAM, x4 CD-ROM, 50Mb HD** ■ Recommended **P266, 32Mb RAM, 400Mb HD** ■ Graphics Accelerator **None** ■ Multi-Player **None** ■ Web Address **www.infogrames.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

PC GAMER

Perpetuating the legacy of a good idea gone wrong. Is *Constructor: Fishing Fleet* up next?

59%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

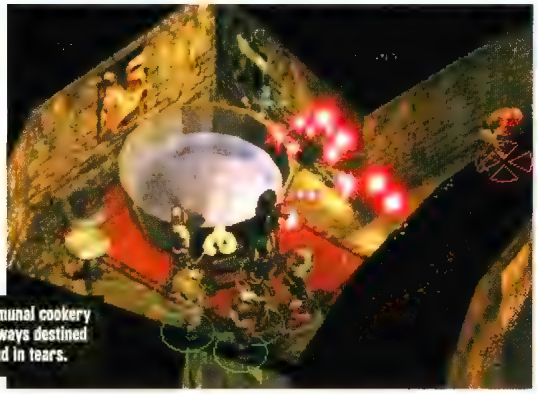
Gangsters (Eidos) PCG 64, 87%
Eidos' take on life in the underworld is also complicated, but at least it's consistent.

SimCity 3000 (EA) PCG 66, 92%
Maxis' opus is hard to beat. Heck, under-fund the police if you must be naughty.

GENRE: ROLE PLAYING

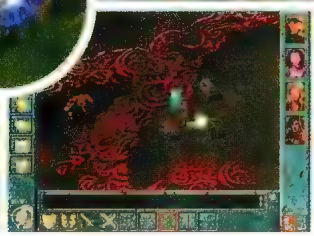
BALDUR'S GATE: TALES OF THE SWORD COAST

Just when you thought it was safe to hang up your travelling beard, here comes Interplay with some shaggy dog stories.



Communal cookery is always destined to end in tears.

They don't like it up 'em.



(Left) Expect to see some pretty weird locations in the new areas.

PC GAMER PROFILE

TOSC is
- More of the same
- Engrossing
- Well-balanced

TOSC is not
- Quick to get into
- Easy
- Revolutionary

AS some of you may know by now, I'm quite a big fan of *Baldur's Gate* (PCG 65, 89%). So when this expansion pack was announced before I'd even finished the main game, my trainee goatee veritably bristled with excitement. New areas, I thought! New characters to join my party! All manner of new beasties and weapon's o' doom with which to smite them! Another two weeks of my social life up in smoke!

Of course, life is full of little disappointments. We were spoiled by *Baldur's Gate*; by its enormity and engrossing plot. Adding an expansion pack to a game of this size and scope is a brave undertaking. You might think that a title which already offers over 100 hours of adventuring wouldn't have much need for expansions, but here it is anyway. *TOSC* gives you around 25-30 hours extra playing time in the way of new quests and areas to explore, and it snuggles itself into the existing game quite cleverly

Stretching

The expansion's contents are set outside the main plot, with a new small

"I can't help feeling that they're holding back."

town acting as the centre for the quests Unfortunately, there are no new NPCs to join your party, and most of the new beasties are variations on existing templates It's also aimed at very high level characters, and so presents a decent challenge to those who have finished the game. You can choose to replay the entire game, making use of the new areas, or go from any of your previous save points

The mechanics of the game are largely unaltered, but there are several small changes for the better – *TOSC* works as a patch as well. The experience point limit has been extended from 89,000 to 161,000, allowing all characters to gain a couple more levels and become more powerful Naturally, there are higher level spells to go with that, but I can't help feeling that Black Isle (Interplay's RPG division) are holding something back. And, indeed, they are

Although it's yet to be officially announced, the rumours are that a full-on sequel is on the cards. With this in mind, developers Bioware are surely hoarding up their best ideas for *Baldur's Gate 2*, which will doubtless improve on the successful formula. In the meantime, though, we'l have to be happy with *TOSC*, which is essentially more of the same. And that's fine because I'll use any excuse to go frolicking with the ogres again. **ROSS ATHERTON**

SYSTEM MISER

How *Tales Of The Sword Coast* will play on *your* PC.

■ Test System **P133, 16Mb RAM, no 3D card**

VERDICT: Turning off environmental sounds and graphics and using a huge swap file helps, but it's still *very* jerky.

■ Test System **P233, 32Mb RAM, Voodoo1 (not used)**

VERDICT: Good performance overall, even with loads of monsters on screen. Quick load times and smoother scrolling.

■ Publisher **Interplay** ■ Developer **Bioware** ■ Price **£20** ■ Minimum System **P133, 32Mb RAM, 300Mb HD, *Baldur's Gate*** ■ Recommended **P200, 32Mb RAM** ■ Graphics Accelerator **None** ■ Multi-Player **LAN, modem, serial, Internet (up to six players)** ■ Web Address **www.interplay.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

PC GAMER

They've made it even bigger and a bit better – but the revolution is yet to come.

80%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Final Fantasy VII (Eidos) PCG 59, 93%
Japanese styling, weird story and flashy graphics hide a genuine gaming classic.

Fallout 2 (Interplay) PCG 65, 83%
Same developer as *BG*, and similar look – but it's post-nuclear, grim and full of guns.

NO REST FOR THE WICKED.

CREATOR

Build things without kneeling painfully on a 2x4 brick.

■ Publisher **Lego** ■ Developer **Superscape** ■ Price **£25**

At least your little brother won't get bits stuck down his throat.

WITHIN moments of installing *Creator* I was in conflict with my inner child.

IC: It's Lego – but on the PC!
Me: It is indeed Lego – but on the PC.
IC: Look, it's got every single kind of brick, and you can stick them together just like the real thing!
Me: So it would appear.
IC: You can get cars to drive around, helicopters to fly and people to walk! You can stick cameras everywhere and look through them!
Me: And?
IC: And there are special exploding bricks, which you can attach to cars so they break apart if they crash! And there are loads of pre built models that precisely replicate real life Lego sets
Me: Yes, and?
IC: And er that's it!
Me: So where's the game?
IC: Eh?
Me: Where's the challenge? The missions? The resource management?
IC: Resource management? Look, gramps, this is Lego, not a game. It's a, erm, 'unique 3D construction environment'.
Me: But Lego *was* the original resource management game. Could you scrape together enough sloping bricks to finish that roof? Could you secure an advance on your pocket money to buy that vital police helicopter set?
IC: You don't get it, do you?
Me: What they've achieved here is undeniably impressive – creating computerised Lego, accurate down to the last knobbly bit. It must have taken them ages. But robbed of the tactile pleasure of clicking bricks together, Lego ceases to be fun. It's *3D Construction Kit* on the Amiga all over again. And the 1980s 'virtual reality' style interface slows down horribly when you try to build sinister ranks of black clad security guards.
IC: But it's Lego! You're no fun anymore.
Me: Go to bed
IC: No wonder you spend so much time alone these days
Me: Bed!

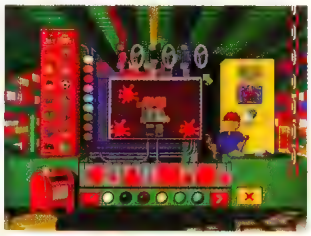
JONATHAN DAVIES

"It's 3D Construction Kit on the Amiga."

PC GAMER

Lego – but on the PC. Redeemed only by the included Biker Bob set.

45%



LOCO

■ Publisher **Lego**
■ Developer **Superscape**
■ Price **£20**

Within moments of installing *Loco* I was in conflict with my cardigan. The sleeve had become entangled in my swivel chair and I was finding it difficult to move the mouse.

Loco is even more disappointing than *Creator*, in that the train sets you build don't even look like Lego ones. They look, if anything, like the fruits of a £1.99 Mastertronic game from about 1986.

Once again there's no actual game involved. You scatter lengths of track, buildings, bits of scenery and trains about the screen until your patience expires. You then watch trains trundling about, picking people up and dropping them off. You can change the points. You can use your railway as a screensaver. And that's it.

Oh, except there's a gimmick. Click on the post office and you can decorate a postcard with Lego images, inscribe it with a message and stick a stamp on it. It'll then be collected by a mail train and delivered to a chum similarly equipped with a copy of *Loco* either on your LAN or over the Internet. Or if, as seems probable, you don't know anyone else who's Locoed up, you can write to imaginary game characters and get replies. And that's it. Really this time.

Loco is essentially a crude version of *Railroad Tycoon*, minus even the most rudimentary attempt at a game structure. And as such, while it'll no doubt attract a glowing review in Family CD-ROM MultiMeDia Monthly magazine (possibly even taking pride of place on the cover, appearing on a monitor surrounded by an amazed father, mother and two children) PC GAMER must condemn it.

JONATHAN DAVIES

18%

Even less fun than *Creator*.

DUNGEON KEEPER 2

HORNY AND THE MISTRESS

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JACK NICKLAUS 6
GOLDEN BEAR CHALLENGE

Jack's sixth round sees him well under-par.

■ Publisher **Activision** ■ Developer **Hypnos Entertainment** ■ Price **£30**

Bob's opponents always objected to his special golfing rug.
Monkey E 14 feet to hole
3rd shot
Putter (14 feet)
At least the nice views will take your mind off the mediocre game.

THE Golden Bear may have ruled the world's golf courses for two decades but he's got some way to go before he can claim similar success in the PC golfing field. *JN6GBC* (as it shall henceforth be known) is a fairly lame beast, caught in a Kodiak bear-sized development trap that leaves the game feeling like it was designed by committee.

The graphics are essentially excellent, with photographic backdrops and polygonal foregrounds resulting in an infinitely adjustable camera and some lovely views. But hand in hand with this go numerous glitches, disappearing balls and some out-of-character moves. The background sound is adequate (apart from

"Hardly inspiring and even slightly playschool."

when the hilariously bellowing seagull squawks into earshot) but the commentary is tedious, unhelpful and delivered with a complete lack of excitement. Which is pretty odd considering they have such truly memorable lines as "Oooooh, he's got some chicken left on that bone" to work with.

The shot taking systems are the now standard two- and three-click and there's a respectable mouse swing option. However, by default the game kindly suggests when you should click, therefore removing a lot of the fun from planning your shots. The interface is hardly inspiring and even slightly playschool in appearance, like the giant-sized golfers who tower over the greens.

The Bear himself provides shot sensitive tips, which are fairly interesting but pretty badly produced – completely at odds with *Links 99's* slick, but boring, Arnold Palmer footage. The courses also come from the great man's paws; the selection of five is generous, they're nicely varied and are undoubtedly the game's strongest point.

However, the competition in this genre is tougher than ever and, while there's nothing catastrophically wrong with *JN6GBC*, you can do a lot better almost anywhere else. Some elements have been well realised but as a whole it just doesn't quite make the cut.

JAMES FLYNN

PC GAMER

Undistinguished brown bear in a market full of polars and grizzlies. Forgettable.

69%

TUNGUSKA: LEGEND OF FAITH

■ Publisher **Project 2**
■ Developer **Exortus**
■ Price **£40**

What galls about *Tunguska* is that it'll cost you forty of your hard-earned pounds to sample its underwhelming charms. What galls *most* about *Tunguska* is that, should you somehow be duped into shelling out for it, you can never reclaim those precious seconds spent playing on it. I say seconds, because that's precisely how long it takes for you to realise that this is tedious bilge of the highest order.

Ostensibly a bargain-basement *Tomb Raider* clone, *Tunguska's* faults are manifest. Its most immediate problems are: a) disastrously syrupy controls, and b) a comatose camera seemingly inherited from such evergreen classics as, say, *Queen: The Eye*. Situated in a static position for each pre-rendered screen, the view only changes when you wend your snail-paced way to the opposite end of said screens, whereupon it abruptly switches to a completely new, and disorienting, angle. Thus, the timeless gaming novelty of traps and enemies waiting *just off screen* is given a thorough workout. Walking straight into a whirling blade that there's no way to see is always a joy to experience.

The terrible cursor-led controls only exacerbate problems, especially in combat. The time it takes to turn is immense, and often fatal. Add tiresome switch-pulling and back-tracking and you've got a game that couldn't try harder to disappoint. And having to switch to a first-person view to open doors is both baffling and *very* pointless.

Games have come such a long way in the last couple of years. There is no place in today's shiny PCs for this outmoded rubbish.

JES BICKHAM

34%

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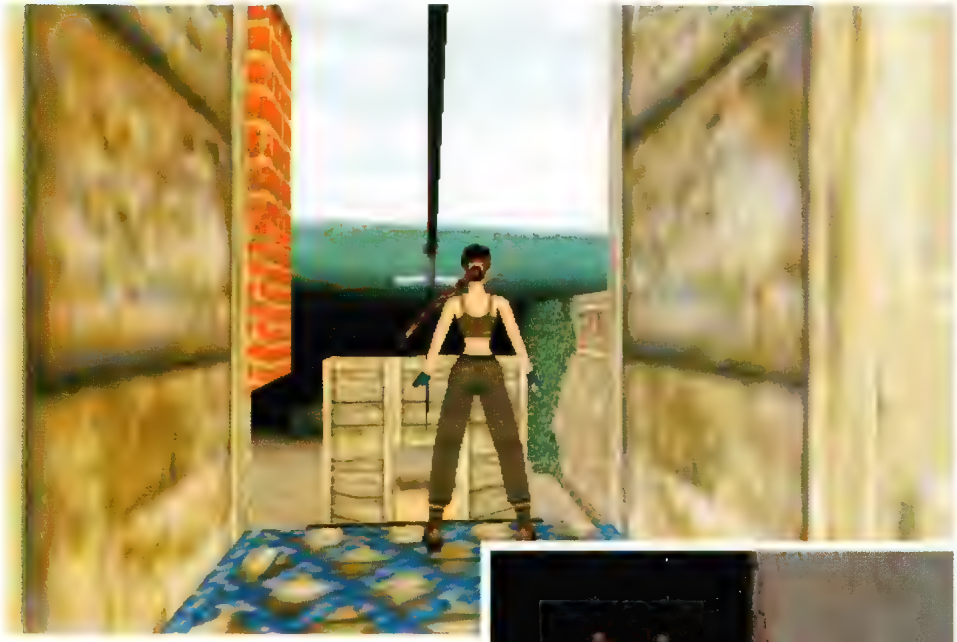
THEY'RE BACK!

In recognition of the confirmed release date of the European Dreamcast, Sega offload all their old PC games. But first, some big knockers.

By STEVE OWEN

TOMB RAIDER II THE GOLDEN MASK

■ Publisher **Eidos** ■ Price **£13**



AS if you haven't bought this already, Lara's second outing has been released on budget just in time for the long, wet summer break.

But the quiz winners among you will notice something a little different with this release. Yes, the words *The Golden Mask* have been added to the end of the title. This isn't to sucker fans into buying this version too, because you get more than just a longer title. *The Golden Mask* refers to four new levels on a second CD.

"Will the *Tomb Raider* bubble ever burst?"

After spotting a golden mask in a photo, Lara hotfoots it to a small island in the Bering Sea in an attempt to capture the goodie, which is said to bestow the power of reanimation on the wearer. Which is nice

The first level sees a return to the snowmobile from the full game, as Lara battles with a bunch of mercenaries looking for gold. The second level takes place in an abandoned Russian gold mine, the excavation of which stopped suddenly when it ran into an old Innuit settlement, an Ancient Kingdom that uses ancient powers to supply light and heat underground. Blimey, it's exciting, eh?

Thankfully, even now, Eidos aren't forcing you to buy the game. The new levels use the existing *Tomb Raider II* technology and will be available on Eidos' Web site for free download, hopefully by the time you read this. Pop along to *www.tombraider.com*

We have to wonder if the *Tomb Raider* bubble will ever burst, but even these four new levels are enough to instill some interest in a game that's not nearly as dated as the original. So, she can't crawl and she doesn't have ears in this version, and the second game involved a little too much shooting and not enough puzzle solving, but it's the consistently good level design that keeps us coming back to *Tomb Raider*. That and her agility, admittedly

PC GAMER

Not the best *Tomb Raider* of the trilogy, but it's still lots of fun.

90%

MONKEY ISLAND TRILOGY

■ Publisher **LucasArts/ Activision**
■ Price **£40**

There hasn't been a trilogy this good since... since. . Well, there's never been a trilogy this good. Its three parts span a period of eight gaming years. The first game came in 1991 when we were enjoying screens that could display 16 colours – AT ONCE – and sound cards that you could buy separately and meant that your PC did more than bleep. *The Curse Of Monkey Island* came in 1998, foregoing the trends of lens flare and real-time coloured lighting using 3D accelerators with as much memory as 16 1991 standard PCs

Technical improvements ignored for a moment, it's difficult to decide which is the best of the three adventures. The first one is perhaps a little too short, primarily because the puzzles are far more logical, but it introduced the excellent witty swordplay, where you won a duel by coming up with amusing responses to your opponent's insults. Touché

The second adventure is probably the funniest and the most fanciful, with one of the finest and most amusing game endings ever made and an astounding spitting competition. And the third, without the help of the original designer Ron Gilbert, just kept it all going beautifully, retaining the vicious sense of humour and an eclectic group of wonderfully written characters

It's just a bit puzzling that the trilogy is going for £40 when you can pick up the first two in one Virgin Double pack for £15, and Activision have released the third game on budget at £20. Well, perhaps it'll be a bit cheaper by the time it hits the shelves.

93%

VIRTUA FIGHTER

■ Publisher **Expert**
■ Price **£15**

This is still one of the PC's best beat 'em-ups (only superseded by its own sequel, naturally) and we are very grateful that it's been re-released on a budget label

Whenever we put together these pages we do enjoy looking back at the old reviews and seeing how the comments made then stand up to scrutiny today Looking at the review of *Virtua Fighter* we were delighted to read the claim that Sega were writing PC versions of their Saturn and arcade hits because they were going to become a purely software company by the end of this glorious millennium

Well, one Dreamcast later and it seems slightly clearer. This must have been a little test to see how well the PC and Sega got on; and the answer was "not very well at all". So Sega have opted to take the best bits of the PC (and Windows) and created their own mini PC

Sorry, we really should be talking about this game. Well, it's a rather stunning 3D battle, with some fantastic characters and superb moves. Forget weapons, this is a fist and foot war; with just three buttons and your direction controlling the hundreds of basic and special moves. The simple but clean polygon characters are wonderfully animated and, most importantly, fast

The computer is intelligent and the two player mode hugely satisfying. And since we never get any good beat-'em ups on the PC, it hasn't obviously aged either. Great face punching fun.

82%

WORLDWIDE SOCCER

■ Publisher **Expert**
■ Price **£15**

While the football market is sewn up by EA's *FIFA* series, and Gremlin's *Actua Soccer* seems set to mop up the stragglers, they weren't always the best games on the market

On the contrary; for a while *Sega Worldwide Soccer* was probably the best and most overlooked of the lot, featuring some wonderful motion-captured graphics and football simulation realism, but

without bogging down the speed of the game by stubbornly displaying every painful frame of animation when trapping the ball or turning

It's a so not the most enjoyable game to play for the first day, because the basic computer skill level is so easy to beat. Like real football, if your striker is facing up to the keeper, his backline defence left sprawling, he will almost certainly score. Since it's simple to get past a basic defence you can rack up some astonishing scores. Instead, you have to learn how to use your own defence to make sure that the same thing doesn't happen to you.

Give it a week, then, and you could find yourself rather addicted to this smart football game. But then, if you were into football, you would already have the latest *Actua* or *FIFA* which have more options, better commentary and all the real names

79%

SEGA RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

■ Publisher **Expert**
■ Price **£15**

One of the finest arcade driving games ever made found itself translated onto the PC without alteration. Bar the fact that your monitor is smaller than the screen at the arcades, your chair probably isn't an imitation bucket seat, your

speakers probably aren't as loud, and your PC probably isn't up to doing this game justice. Even now *Sega Rally Championship* has just four tracks, each of just four stages, and while this seems a little tight in a PC game, each demonstrates Sega's mastery of design. Since these have come straight from the arcade cabinet they get steadily harder, from the gentle curves of the first to the manic cornering of the last, and every one of them is as infuriating as it is exciting.

The gameplay is just as simple, with you starting at the back of the pack and attempting to force your way to the front by the end of the race. Your opponents do little more than hug the racing line, while knocking into them causes you merely to suffer time penalties rather than damage to your car

When it was originally released at £40 it was questionable as to whether you would play it more than 40 times, and that your money was probably better spent in the arcade But now you have to feel that you could be a little more tempted by it Just as driveable as *Colin McRae Rally*, it suffers for not offering quite enough variety.

76%

AND THE REST...

Sega's *Virtua Cop* (72%) is at a much better price now, suffering in the same way as *Rally*: wonderfully designed but woefully short. It should, of course, be a light-gun game, but since we've never had a decent light-gun on the PC this is replaced by the mouse, with a second player on the keyboard or joypad (which, as you can imagine, is nowhere near as easy). Good fun for a couple of days, but no longer.

***Panzer Dragoon* (11%) was one of the original games to use the first 3D card – the Diamond Edge – but this is the standard non-accelerated version. It barely looks any different. But the problem is that *Panzer Dragoon*,**

one of the Saturn's flagship games, just isn't very good. It's a shoot-'em-up on rails, and a very easy one at that, with just seven levels, six of which will be completed on your first go. Avoid it if you can.

Finally, *Daytona USA Deluxe* (15%), alongside *Rally*, was one of the finest arcade driving games ever made. Sadly, it also holds the dubious honour of being one of the worst PC driving games ever released. Despite the excellent track design (there are just three), the graphics engine is terrible, with elements popping up in front of your eyes and no sense of high speed. Disappointingly rubbish.

Having explored the darkest regions of the Amazon jungle (via the Internet), Colin decided, for reasons only known to himself, that he wanted to join the Ungowa tribe. Their initiation ceremony involved dangling by the nipples for three days. Unfortunately his attempt was unsuccessful - soon after the photograph was taken, Colin's ceiling fell in and left him in casualty for eight hours.

Fortunately, joining Webtribe is rather less painful.

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ON-LINE GAMING

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MOVING MAIL

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Alternatively, you can set up your own domain name for around £25 a year and use that as a new permanent e-mail address. We'll take a look at doing that next issue.

JOIN THE CLUB NETWARE

They say you can't get something for nothing. Rubbish! All of a sudden the on-line community has opened up to the slimmer of wallet and you need never pay for the Internet again!

By STEVE OWEN

IT'S a little bit galling if you've been paying around £12 a month for Internet access for the last four or five years. All of a sudden a bunch of companies have realised that they can still make a profit without directly charging you for the cost of being there.

A secondary Internet explosion has rocked our fair isle, as thousands more people are getting connected to the Internet. And we really have to thank the Dixons Stores Group for that

Freeserve was launched last year with a bit of a 'phhhtttt', and without fully explaining to people why they were getting free Internet access. We're a suspicious bunch by nature, and when someone like Dixons (with no previous ISP experience) suddenly promise to save you over £100 a year without any drop in service we have a tendency to think they are lying. We've predicted massive advertising, slow connections, unreliable service and expensive technical support calls.

Well, one out of four isn't bad. Technical support with free ISPs *is* expensive – typically 50p to £1 a minute, and you know they won't be in any hurry to sort out your problem But these charges tend to only pay for the support itself, and are unlikely to be subsidising the entire service

Free ISPs actually make money from your phone call (except for X-Stream, which does rely on advertising). The deregulation of our telephone system means that third-party telecom companies are entitled to buy telephone numbers from BT, and receive a proportion of the income derived from people contacting this number. While you may be only paying a local rate charge to access your ISP (1p to 4p per minute before discounts), the telecom company is actually

Barrysworld is a popular choice with *Quake*-heads.

You are here Funpark
Home
Village
Funpark
Open Times
Events
Booking
AT FUNTASTIC FLAMBARDS
THE FUN AND GAMES GO ON AND ON
Looking for excitement?
You'll find that in plenty at
Funtastic Flambards.
Go for the BUZZ on the Hornet Rollercoaster then Splash Down on the
or fly up, up, and away on the Balloon Race Then, challenge the Space Mission, hold on tight in the Super Bob, dare the remarkable pedal powered Cyclocopter
and afterwards grab a mat to let gravity do the work on the
Feeling brave, then let yourself go down the
Demon Drop Slide - the World's Highest, but many chicken out
For gentler pursuits how about a game of
a ride in the
or perform an amazing balancing act across the wobbly bridges of
After all this activity move into another dimension and enjoy the mind-boggling
exciting the senses as you travel through time and space from the BIG BANG to DINOSAURS, the DAWN OF MAN the BIRTH OF ASTRONOMY and on to the
centering on Cornwall, 11 August 1999

Flambards has never recovered from Steve's happy childhood, when he single-handedly trashed the place.

DAY TRIPPER

SUMMER DAYS OUT

"We're all going on a summer holiday," sang Cliff Richard. But he never had the Internet.

The Big Pit can be found just beneath the Big Arm.

As the summer approaches, so our desire to get away from the PC and bask in the glorious sunshine that is British weather increases. But we can't get off our fat arses just yet. The Internet is there for a reason, and today that reason is to find somewhere to go for the day.

One of our favourite locations is in a principality famous for its fine weather – Wales. But Wales isn't just home to the country's finest beaches. It also has a big pit known as the Big Pit. Visit the 'big pit' in Blaenavon, South Wales, and you shall surely enjoy "an interactive experience in and around a real coal mine". See what you're missing at *www.citypages.co.uk/wales/NP/bigpit/*

If it gets a bit too hot for you in Wales, the weather is likely to be slightly less warm in Scotland, home, among other things notably Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow, to the Secret Bunker. A nuclear safe-haven that has only recently been taken off the official secrets list, you can find out more interesting information at the excitingly named *www.secretbunker.co.uk/*

If you find yourself in the county of Cornwall for the solar eclipse, you can kill some time at Flambards, Cornwall's finest theme park. I should know, I used to go there when I was a kid. It was the days when you could hire powered mini-motorboats a bit like bumper cars, splash about and smash into each other. I doubt they've got them there any more. It sounds a bit dangerous in retrospect. Nevertheless, there are over 40 attractions making an "ideal day out for everybody, whatever their age, tastes or enthusiasms". Find out more at *www.flambards.co.uk/*

At last we can get to the serious and seriously expensive treats. Alton Towers and Thorpe Park are two of the country's largest parks, and your excitement glands can be tickled at *www.thorpepark.co.uk/* and *www.alton-towers.co.uk/*

If you want reviews of these two major parks and loads of smaller parks around the country, we would recommend Neil's information pages at *www.freespace.virgin.net/neil.mowforth/theme.html*

Finally, if by some terrible quirk of fate it rains for some part of the summer, don't forget that you can check out the cinema listings for your area at the Yellow Pages Film Finder – *www.yell.co.uk/yell/ff/home.html*

Of course, you could always stay at home and play *Rollercoaster Tycoon*.

receiving a proportion of this cost, rather than BT getting the lot. The telecom company then pays a proportion of their share to the free ISP.

GOOD CONNECTIONS

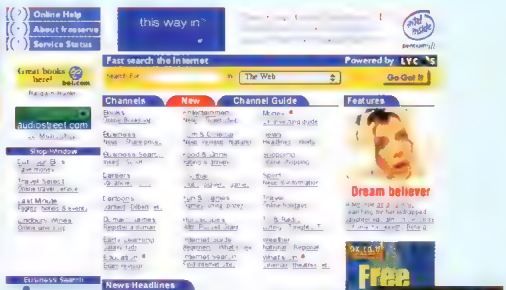
Thus, while subscription services want to encourage you to join (so they get your £12 a month) but don't particularly want you to connect too often (since you clog up the system), free ISPs make all their money while you're on-line. It's in their best interests to get you to connect, and to stay on-line as long as possible. It's our prediction that you will get a faster, more reliable connection with a free ISP than you would with a subscription service.

So why are the old ISPs still in business? Well, it's probably that distrust thing still, while some of the less experienced users will probably prefer the cheap rate technical support. ClaraNET *(www.clara.net)* have chosen a different route, offering cheaper phone calls than BT, at roughly 0.6p per minute off peak rather than 1p per minute (although BT discounts can get this down to 0.65p per minute).

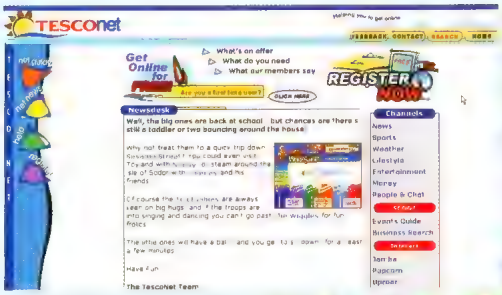
So, basically, you'd be a fool not to use a free ISP and save yourself a lot of money. There are currently over 60 companies offering a service, and the economies of scale suggest that they can't all remain in business until the end of the year. We've picked the 15 services you are most likely to be tempted by, either through reputation or heavy marketing. We've tried each of them out, and all were relatively easy to set up. There's no reason why you can't indulge in long-term tests yourself, although you should bear in mind that many services might disable your account if you don't use it within 4-6 weeks of signing up

There's a great range of services offered by each of the providers, and they aren't nearly as equal as you might imagine. Of course, speed and reliability are the most important factors, but we've got no way of fairly testing these at the moment. Due to the fact that most companies have enjoyed massive initial investment each has proven satisfyingly reliable and only X-Stream has given us any serious connection problems. The company occasionally offers 0800 free call access, but

(Above) Freeserve offers a raft of services including channels for news, information, entertainment and a decent search engine.



Eidos: not just a games publisher, y'know.



(Right) This park has a webcam mounted on a satellite, orbiting the earth at a height of 35 miles. Well, how else could they get this picture?

you'd be lucky to be one of the ones to connect.

Connection reliability will only be a factor when the investors start to expect a return. Each company is promising to upgrade facilities as and when needed by increased usage. Time will tell if the promises are worth the bandwidth they were delivered on.

SECONDARY CONSIDERATIONS

Choose your ISP on secondary factors, then. Most offer e-mail accounts and Web space for creating your own pages. But they should also support V90 modems (which can reach speeds of 56 kbps) and ISDN lines (for BT's Home Highway – we'll look into ISDN in a future issue). We're also interested in the cost of technical support, and what your e-mail address will be. After all, you might be happier with bob@eidosnet.co.uk than looking like a cheapskate with bob@free4all.co.uk.

Signing up usually involves just visiting the Web site, although the

MAC COUP

QUAKE III ON THE MAC FIRST

We were playing on the day of release – but not on our PCs...

The Internet was rocked when Q3Test – a trial run of *Quake III Arena* – appeared first for the Macintosh. This is to be followed by a linux test, before the PC version appears. Needless to say, our Mac-using art boys are pretty chuffed.

As you can imagine, this got up the ganders of the PC gaming community, and it took the calming words of John Carmack to rescue the situation from being another Id PR cock-up.

"We want to get a lot of people playing with the test to find bugs and offer well-thought-out suggestions," said Carmack in his .plan file (a text message that can be requested by anyone).

"If a given bug is going to show up when a thousand people have looked at it, but we had released it to a hundred thousand people, then we are going to have a lot of duplication to wade through.

"The Mac testers will find some obvious problems. We will fix them. The later releases will be better. Don't be spiteful. This is just the beginning of the testing and release process.

"One conspiracy theory suggests that Apple is somehow getting us to do this. What we got from Apple is a few development machines. No cash pay off. No bundling deal. No marketing contract."

He finished his diatribe about Mac gaming with the charming line: "MacOS still sucks."

Fast, furious and good-looking – it's *Quake III* on a Macintosh!

JOIN UP!

THE 15 SERVICES YOU'D MOST LIKELY JOIN

Provider	Contact	Typical e-mail address	V90 support	ISDN support	# of e-mail addresses	Web space	Support cost per minute
Barrysworld	www.barrysworld.co.uk	bob@barrysworld.co.uk	Y	Y	1	0	None
BT Click-Free	www.btclickfree.co.uk	N/a	Y	N	0	0	N/a
EidosNet	www.eidosnet.co.uk	bob@eidosnet.co.uk	Y	Y	Unlimited	20Mb	50p
Electronics Boutique	0800 317778 or any EB shop	anything@bob.in2home.co.uk	Y	Y	Unlimited	Unlimited Free	50p soon
Free4All	www.free4all.co.uk	bob@free4all.co.uk	Y	Y	Unlimited	10Mb	Local
Free-Online	www.free-online.net	bob@idps.co.uk	Y	Y	Unlimited	Unlimited	49p
Freeserve	Dixons, Currys, PC World	bob@login.freeserve.co.uk	Y	N	Unlimited	15Mb	50p
FreeUK	www.freeuk.net	bob@login.freeuk.net	Y	Y	Unlimited	25Mb	50p
Gateway 2000	www.gateway2000.co.uk	bob@ukgateway.net	Y	N	5	15Mb	None
TescoNET	www.tesco.net	bob@tesco.net	Y	Y	5	10Mb	50p
UK Fantastic	www.ukfantastic.net	bob@ukf.co.uk	Y	Y	Unlimited	5Mb	£1
Virgin Net	www.virgin.net	bob@virgin.net	Y	Y	5	10Mb	£1 or £5.99 month
Wireplay	www.wireplay.co.uk	N/a	Y	Y	0	0	50p
X-Stream	www.x-stream.co.uk	bob@x-stream.co.uk	Y	Y	1	20Mb	50p
Yahoo! Online	www.yahoo.co.uk	bob@yahoo.com	Y	Y	1	0	50p

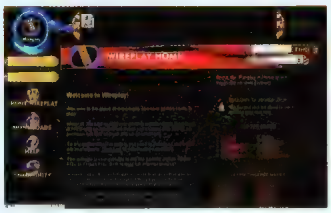
Clearly, Free4All offers considerably more services than any of the other content providers. Opting for a major player such as EB or Freeserve is probably your safest bet, although both systems seem to unduly take over your software, configuring them with their own settings. Some people have had trouble making Freeserve work alongside any alternative connection.

Personally I've been using EidosNet for the last couple of months, and although it's occasionally been difficult to connect on a Sunday afternoon, and I'm not always getting a 56k connection (in fact, it's usually 33.6k), I've generally been happy with the service. With a Wireplay account as well, EidosNet is gradually improving the state of on-line gaming. Which is a 'good thing'.

accounts offered by shops naturally prefer you to pop in – and why not buy a game while you're there, etc.

Having signed up, you will either have to download a small launcher program, or, ideally, a tiny file that installs Windows 95 Dial-Up Networking support. Either way, you could be on-line for free in a matter of minutes, although some services need a couple of hours to update their databases before you start.

Finally, make sure you know what phone number you are dialling (there will be different ones for modem and ISDN users) and add it to your Friends and Family settings if you have a BT phone line, to save valuable pennies. You can do this on-line at *www.bt.com/home/friends_frm.htm*,



which lets you change your details up to 100 times in a billing period.

We've put together a table of our findings. Virgin Net went free at the start of April, but a number of inquisitive types (including ourselves) have yet to hear anything back from the company, and requests for installation CDs have been seemingly ignored. We can only hope that these teething problems will be ironed out by the time you read this. Some of the services offer UK content, such as the news, weather and reviews. But Free4All offers an enormous range of goodies, including free fax messages to any fax machine in the world and fax reception (it's sent to you as a graphic attachment in an e-mail). The on-line instructions need sorting out, though.

Some have special games links, too. Barrysworld was originally designed as a fast *Quake* server, and it's still one of the fastest services available EidosNet is linked straight into Mplayer's European server, while Wireplay is now free, offers an Internet connection, and dedicated games server support.

We can't guarantee or predict how successful any of these companies will be, or even guarantee that they will all still be running by the end of the year. But take advantage of them while you can, and get on-line for nothing more than a cheap phone call

The UKTPP has loads of badly-spelt information and links.

NEWS FLASH!

HOLD THE FRONT PAGE

Free ISP + free calls = free Internet!

Just as we go to press we've heard news that electrical superstore Tempo are about to launch a new free ISP which offers *free* off-peak phone calls. To qualify you have to join the Localtel phone service (no details at present). Pick up installation CDs from any of the 48 Tempo stores. We'll hopefully try it out in time for next issue.

GAMES AVAILABLE ON WIREPLAY

By the time you read this, *Quake III Arena* (test version) and *Team Fortress Classic* should be available. In the meantime, here's a complete list of available games for your records.

RAPID PLAY SERVICE:
Actua Golf 2
Actua Soccer 2
Actua Soccer 3

Age Of Empires
Age Of Empires: Rise Of Rome
Armoured Fist 2
Baldur's Gate
Big Red Racing
Blood
Blood 2
Colin McRae Rally
Combat Flight Simulator
Command & Conquer
Comanche 3
Daytona Deluxe
Descent
Descent 2
Doom
Duke Nukem 3D
EF2000
Euro 96
Extreme Assault
F-22 ADF
F-22 Total Air War
FA-18 Korea
Final Liberation
Flight Sim 98
Formula Karts
Forsaken
Fragile Allegiance
Gettysburg

THIS MONTH ON WIREPLAY

Stop throwing those bloody grenades at me.

By STEVE OWEN

TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC

IT'S captured the imagination of Internet gamers throughout the world. *Team Fortress Classic* is the multi-player action of 1999. And after our startling review last month, we thought we'd give you a better idea of how to play it.

Assuming you've got the latest *Half-Life* patch (version 1.0.0.9) – it's on our CD, or you can download it from *www.barrysworld.co.uk* – you've already got *Team Fortress Classic* installed. Connect to the Internet and then search for servers from the multi-player menu. Or, even better, join Wireplay (it is free now, after all) and play it through their system. For your first game, we'd recommend you find a server playing the 2fort map. It's a simple Capture The Flag session, with red and blue teams

At up to 64 players, it's practically an orgy.

NEW KEYS

Before you get started you'll want to check the default keys for the new commands. Most of them are scattered around the W, S, A and D keys, so let's hope you've taken our advice in the past and adopted that set-up.

Use Special Skill – **Right mouse button**
Change Character Class – **B**
Change Team – **N**
Throw Grenade One – **F**
Throw Grenade Two – **G**
Drop Flag – **C**
Flag Status – **I**
Drop Unused ammo – **X**
Call Medic – **Z**
(Demoman) Drop 5 second grenade pack – **M**
(Spy) Feign Death – **H**
(Spy) Feign Death Silently – **J**

When reassigning keys, it's probably best that you leave weapon selection where it belongs – on the top row of numbers. If you haven't done so already, connect to the Internet or Wireplay. In fact, since it makes for faster games, from now on we'll assume you're using Wireplay to play. It makes joining games a bit easier, although you obviously have less servers willing to take you. Connect to Wireplay Direct (rather than Wireplay Internet) and then opt for the DirectPlay channel. You can then select *Half-Life*, whereupon the game loads and a server list pops up.

Double-click on any server playing 2fort (our favourite) and with a slot free for a new player, and the map loads. The first screen presents an overview of your mission, in this case a simple Capture The Flag scenario, where two teams – red and blue – attempt to steal a flag from the enemy base and return it to their own, earning ten points in the process.

(Right) The Spy, in all his masked glory. See him gurn with anger!

TEAMING UP

The key to this mission, and indeed most of the scenarios in *Team Fortress*, is teamwork and a varied team structure, where some players defend the base, others go for the flag, and others act in supportive roles – cover for the flag stealer, or medics for the wounded. We'll cover classes presently.

Having figured out what it is you have to do, press fire to move onto the next screen. You've got to pick what team to join first. The can let the server assign you (option 5), so you'll join the team with the fewer players, but you can opt for one colour or another. Press the score button (defaulted to Tab) to see how the teams are split. And now it's time to pick what job you want to do. Different playing styles warrant different classes, but experimentation is the only way to be sure. The Heavy Weapons Guy is the easiest one to play first time round, as he is fairly slow, but heavily armoured. Choose from the following:

SCOUT

He's great for nicking the flags, since he's faster than the other characters. His special skill displays the status of each team's flag. He's low on armour, though. He can also spot enemy spies and disarm a Demoman's explosives (see below). If you choose the Scout,

Here is the news...

IT'S FREE NOW, THANK GOD

The major headline is that Wireplay is now a free service, and includes Internet access. You need to download the latest Wireplay client software, but once you've done that you can enjoy the realms of super-fast on-line access and multi-player gaming for the same price as a local phone call.

But have patience. During the first two weeks, the new service was far from speedy, as various teething problems meant that our modem refused to get a decent connection to Wireplay. *Team Fortress Classic* was almost unplayable at times.

As part of the new free process, Wireplay is now also offering Internet access. The service has now been split into two sections: Wireplay Power Play is like the original Wireplay service, allowing access to the dedicated gaming servers. Power Play is still separate from the Internet, and prevents Internet users from joining in the games thus improving the system's performance. Open Play is accessible by the whole world, but as a consequence there is no guarantee of system performance, or the latency of other gamers. It does give you access to the Internet as well, though.

This welcome move by Wireplay could be just what's needed to open the service out to people that so far have objected to chucking any more money at the telecommunications conglomerate. We can all moan, but why don't you just buy some of their shares instead, and take advantage of their ridiculously good profits?

IT WAS A CLOSE SECOND

Any other month and this would have been the big opener. *Quake III: Arena* test is now available, and as we go to press Wireplay is setting up servers to try out the one available map. (There is a second included, but it only works over a network.) The news appears to be that the test only works with the 3Dfx range of cards, and you may need to download the very latest OpenGL drivers.

AND FINALLY...

If you want to get Wireplay news quicker than we can deliver it (but not as wonderfully written, naturally), subscribe to the free Wireplay Direct weekly newsletter by sending an e-mail to: wirenews@wireplay.net with 'Subscribe' in the subject line.

Quake III will be coming to Wireplay any time soon.

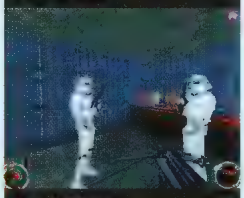
WIREPLAY CHARTS

By the time you read this, *Quake III Test* and *Team Fortress Classic* will probably be lying at number 1 and 2.

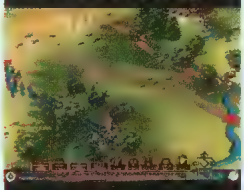
1. Quake II
2. Half-Life
3. Air Attack
4. MUD II
5. Age Of Empires: Rise Of Rome
6. Quake
7. Duke Nukem 3D
8. Bridge
9. C&C: Red Alert
10. Total Annihilation

GAMES AVAILABLE ON WIREPLAY

G-Nome
Grand Theft Auto
Half-Life
Incubation
Jedi Knight
Jedi Knight: Mysteries Of The Sith



Legal Crime
Monster Truck Madness 2
Motocross Madness
MUD II
NASCAR Racing 2
Netmech
Plane Crazy
Populous: The Beginning
Red Alert
Redneck Rampage
Rumble In The Void
The Settlers III
Shadow Warrior
Shogo: Mobile Armour Division
Sid Meier's Gettysburg



Star Wars Supremacy
Terminal Velocity
Total Annihilation
Ultimate Doom
Uprising
Virtua Fighter 2
Virtua Fighter 2 Demo
Virtual Snooker
Warcraft 2
Wargasm
Warhammer Dark Omen

keep moving with random sideways shimmies. If you can't get past a defence, call for support from your team-mates. Your concussion grenades can be used to disorientate defenders. You also have caltrops – small metal spikes – that you can drop to slow down anyone following you. Advanced users may attempt the the Concussion Grenade Jump. By timing your jump correctly you can send yourself flying.

SNIPER

The sad loner is right at home with the Sniper. He's useless at close range but can kill people on the opposite side of the map with a single head shot. The longer you hold down the mouse-button the more powerful your shot, so by keeping your laser-sight pressed against a wall where your target can't see it you can get an impressive "First Strike" bonus. You should place yourself against darkened backgrounds for better camouflage. A Sniper standing against a background of explosive blackened walls is almost invisible

SOLDIER

Heavily armoured, his special skill is to reload. He enjoys the use of the rocket launcher, which can hold four rockets in one go. A Soldier should use hit-and-run tactics when in an extended fight, nipping behind cover to reload his weapon before re-engaging.

As the Soldier, you do get a nice grenade. It shoots out nails in every direction for a few seconds before exploding, and is a great way to clear a room, or at least keep enemies pinned behind cover. The Soldier is also the only person who can rocket jump, that technique of firing at your feet as you jump, propelling you into normally inaccessible areas of the map. Also note that missiles have a bad habit of going straight through peoples bodies. Avert this embarrassment by aiming at nearby solid surfaces

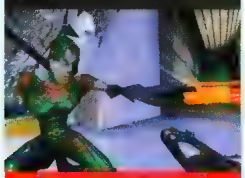
DEMOMAN

He's a loud, explosive sort, who can use his 'detpacks' to blow up grates and other items that might be blocking

GAMES AVAILABLE ON WIREPLAY

MIND GAMES SERVICE:
Black Maria
Cribbage
Dalmatian Pirates
Draughts
Fox & Geese
Go
Gomoku
Hex
Mancala
Nap
Nine Men's Morris
Poker
Push & Shove
Renju
Reversi
Wild West
Wireplay Bridge
Wireplay Chess

GAME WORLDS SERVICE:
Air Attack
Quake
Quake II
SiN
Unreal



You can find Wireplay on the internet at http://www.wireplay.co.uk or call 0845 757 7577 12 pm – 12 am

(Below) That red dot means your head will shortly be parting company with your shoulders.

⇨ the way, thus creating new ways into the enemy base. Otherwise he's an average fighter, but enjoys his unique grenade and pipebomb launcher. The grenades explode on contact with enemies or after a few seconds, but the pipe bombs remain until they are exploded manually. Try surrounding a dropped flag with them to make it almost irretrievable. You might notice that sometimes these pipebombs go off by themselves. In fact, drop too many and the oldest one will detonate, while if you die everything you've dropped will go up in smoke.

MEDIC

The Medic's prime advantage is that he can heal himself and the rest of his squad using his skill button. Other units can call out for the Medic, or you can check their health by simply pointing yourself at them. The medipack works just like a weapon, where healing uses 'ammo'. However, the pack actually affects anyone who's standing near you.

If a pal is on full health the medipack gives them an adrenaline shot, increasing their health above maximum. Use it on the enemy and you infect them. Their health will gradually decrease until they are dead or healed by their own Medic. The infection is airborne too, so if he gets too close to a friend they become infected too. A Medic is essential for the Hunted map.

HEAVY WEAPONS GUY

The HW Guy is strong, slow and packs a mean punch. As the HW Guy you might prefer to defend, since you move so slowly. If someone starts firing at you, fire back and they'll probably die before you do. If a serious assault threatens your position, simply throw a MIRV grenade. Due to its delayed multiple explosion effect you should be able to retreat safely to get re-supplied.

In a busy game, the HW Guy can even stand over the flag to protect it, while a Medic and Engineer remain nearby to heal him and replace armour. And your sheer bulk can block ramps, much to the annoyance of Scouts.

PYRO

The Pyro's flamethrower keeps people burning for some time, but it doesn't do an awful lot of damage. Still, while people are burning they can't accurately shoot at you – or anyone else. They're especially devastating when used as part of an attack team.

While your flamethrower should be used in close quarters, you might prefer the incendiary cannon for long distance, particularly as the rockets can actually light people the other side of a wall or ceiling. Napalm grenades light the floors, and anyone that runs through them. Lobbing one onto a sniping balcony can ruin defensive fire for quite some time.

SPY

The Spy can disguise himself as any member of the enemy, while his knife can kill in just one swipe to the rear. He can also feign death, and, bar the Scout, is the only class that can see through enemy Spies' disguises.

You might become the victim of friendly fire. It takes a couple of seconds to change disguises, but it's usually best not to do it in a friendly base. The safest way is to do it while feigning death. Whenever you use your weapons you lose your disguise, unless you lob a grenade instead. You also lose your disguise when you steal the flag, and you'll look like a Spy until you drop it.

Sentry guns won't shoot you either, even if you lob a grenade at them. Consider acting as a forward attack, clearing out sentry guns before your team mates are mown down.

ENGINEER

The Engineer can be an extremely useful support unit, capable of building sentry guns and ammunition dispensers, and repairing armour or creating ammo.

To do this he needs metal, which is generated by collecting armour. Any armour you don't need is automatically converted into metal, up to a maximum of 200 units. You need 130 to build a sentry gun, and you can only have one active at a time, so pick a good spot The very best are the ones you can't use a nimble grenade throw to take out. Upgrade, repair and reload the gun by hitting it with your wrench.

The dispenser chucks out armour and ammo every ten seconds, and makes an excellent mini-supply room for a group of defenders that need to hold a position.

OTHER STUFF

Another important aspect for all classes is the use of grenades. Everyone has two keys linked to two different grenade types. Each has a three-second fuse, but the longer you hold the button down the longer it'll remain in your hands, giving the enemy less time to react when you lob it. Hold the button down too long and it'll blow up in your face.

Discover the flag situation by hitting the I key (by default), while X drops any ammunition that your character class can't use, so that team mates can pick it up and use it instead. You can send secret messages to your team by pressing U and then typing your message, or set-up hotkeys for particular messages. You can also drop the flag using C if you are near a team-mate that can run quicker than you.

Right, now get practising. This article has only lightly broken the surface of the complexities that *Team Fortress* offers you. But remember the one rule of *TFC*: the team that's best organised will win. Always. And you do want to win, don't you?

Pyros have some resistance to fire, so these two might be here all day.

ATI RAGE FURY 32MB TV out
ATI RAGE FURY 32MB
ATI RAGE FURY 16MB
ATI RAGE FURY 8MB

GET FURIOUS!

It's a great game. It's a great movie.
But the graphics just aren't up to it.
It's time to get furious. It's time to get
a Rage Fury card from ATI. The
performance of these cards will blow
your mind. Personal Computer World
named the Rage Fury as their June
'Editor's Choice', so why not
go out and get one right now.

- a true 128-bit engine and interface
- breathtaking 2D, 3D and video performance with16 million colours
- full 3D acceleration in all modes and all colour depths
- built in DVD/MPEG-2 decoding for full frame, full-screen DVD video
- support for Open GL. Direct 3D and Direct X 6.0

ATI is the world leader in PC Graphics Technology. But don't take our word for it, ask the world's top PC manufacturers. Or see our independent media reviews at www.atitech.com

NEXT MONTH

- The scoop on the all-new PC GAMER gaming leagues!
- Which on-line gaming service is best? We spill the beans.

PLUS!

- Latest news on PC GAMER's forthcoming Web site.
- *Quake III* and *TFC* on Wireplay!

PC GAMER

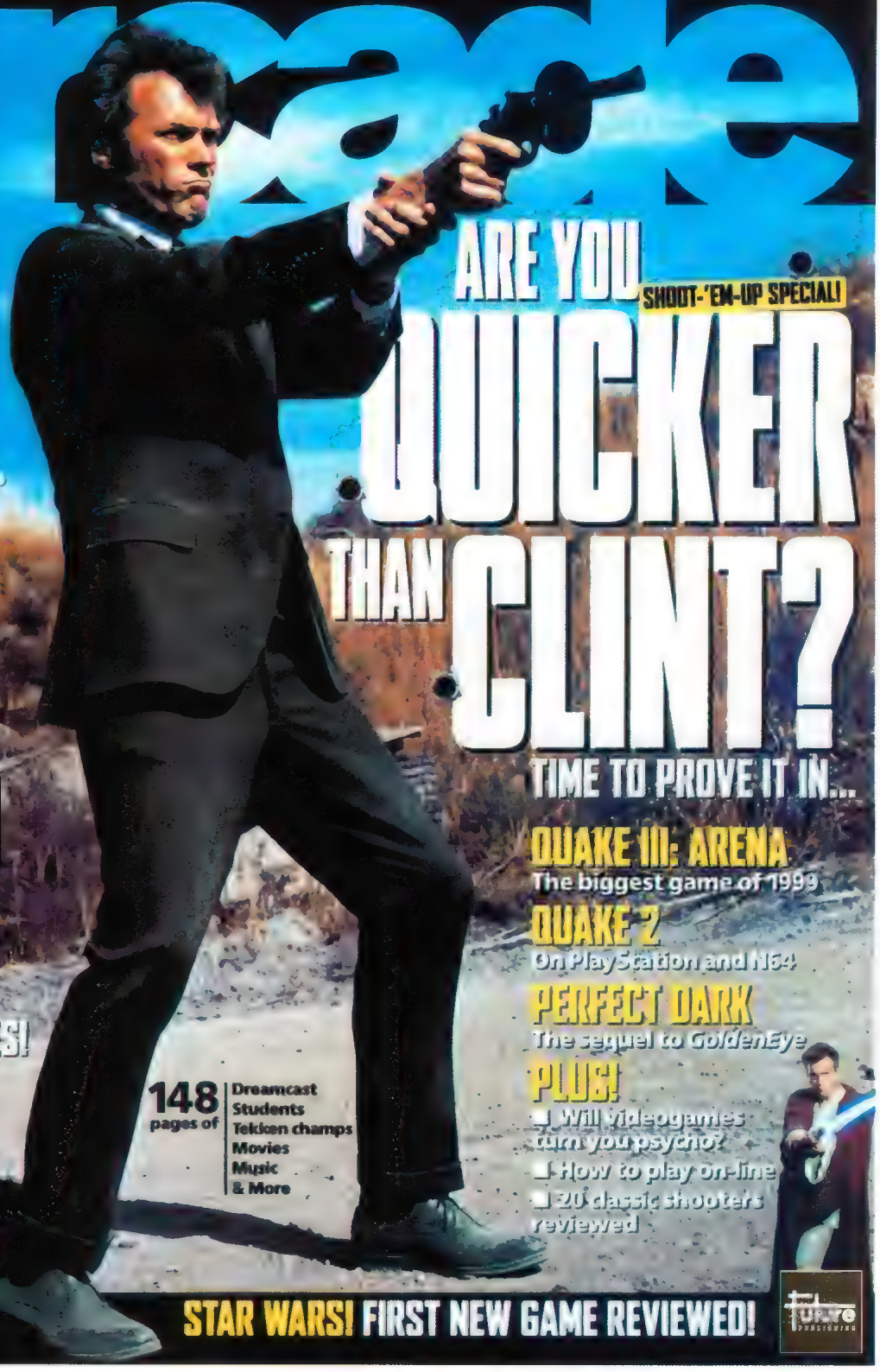
PLAYSTATION NINTENDO 64 GAME BOY PC

HOT!

Arcade

The videogame magazine

July 1998
Issue 8 £2.80



WIN A COIN-OP!
£2,000 *Space Invaders* machine up for grabs

PLAYSTATION
56 hot games reviewed

DREAMCAST
Can Sega convince you to buy their new console?

SHOOT-'EM-UP SPECIAL!

ARE YOU QUICKER THAN CLINT?

TIME TO PROVE IT IN...

QUAKE III: ARENA
The biggest game of 1999

QUAKE 2
On PlayStation and N64

PERFECT DARK
The sequel to *GoldenEye*

PLUS!
- Will videogames turn you psycho?
- How to play on-line
- 20 classic shooters reviewed

INSIDE

EXPOSED! NEW LARA MODEL IN HER UNDIES!

148 pages of
Dreamcast
Students
Tekken champs
Movies
Music
& More

STAR WARS! FIRST NEW GAME REVIEWED!

Future Publishing

Arcade 8. The videogame magazine. On sale 3 June.

CABLES

The Postman is always brightly received here. As long as it's not the film. Write to: **James Ashton, Cables, PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.** Or e-mail: **cables@futurenet.co.uk**

IN SHORT

If you were in a warzone, would you prefer an M16, an M-60, a Kalishnikov or 30 grenades?
Ronan Murphy, Middlesex

We'd prefer not to be there, frankly. Ed

A perfect golf sim deserves 80% at most because it's... well... golf
Moria Palmier, E-mail

But some people like golf. OK, so we're not sure why. Ed

Kieron scares me, I think I recognise him from Crimewatch.
Richard Mills, E-mail

He knew he should have worn a thicker stocking. Ed

Do you think that at any point in my otherwise meaningless existence that beavers will achieve cult status?
Dan Every, E-mail

Well, Matt frequently types 'beaver' into his Internet search engine. Does this count? Ed

If you don't print this letter, I'll execute the Barneys.
Impish, E-mail

Go on! Fire away! Oh... Damn. Ed

LOGIC I GUESS

Oh the irony South Park is a flat, 2D cartoon and would seem to be ideal for an 'hilarious' venture into any genre, particularly the FPS However, by making the likes of Kenny, Cartman et al into rounded 3D characters, Iguana have not only missed the point of the cartoon but have passed up an opportunity to widen their sales figures enormously by letting the game run on a 286 (probably). Why? I can't see the logic. I guess it'll have tons of FMV and a few *Myst*-like puzzles as well if the corporate gods get their hands on it
Jeremy Scott, E-mail

Alternatively, they could write it in a couple of afternoons and send it out in a big box knowing loads of people would buy it anyway. Ed

MILD SWEAR WORDS

I have been an avid reader of PC GAMER for several years now and I believe I have developed the formulae for a publishable letter to your magazine. It should include: 1) Some mild swear words; 2) A question that has been asked hundreds of times before; 3) A REAL question that will hopefully benefit the reader(s) of PC GAMER, and 4) A compliment to the magazine. So then... Bollocks. When is *C&C Tiberian Sun* coming out? Crap What changes is the new editor going to make to the magazine? Keep up the good work. Top mag. Arse, etc
Tom 'Marine' Hale, E-mail

You were going so well until you said "Arse". It won't get printed now, and that's for sure. And what do you mean "reader(s)"? Ed

LETTER OF THE MONTH

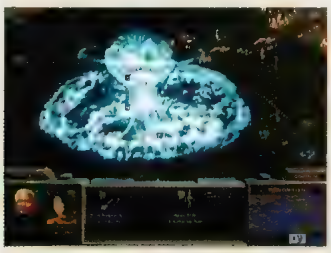
THEIR PATHETIC CAMPAIGNS

According to a professor at Glasgow University speaking on the BBC midday news, computer games are 'mindless'. This seems to be the general view of the media, especially the various tabloids with their pathetic campaigns to get games banned. This is to me, and many other gamers, very insulting as well as being totally false. Has this man ever seen *Civ II*? Or *Alpha Centauri*? I think not. It's about time that the technophobes in this country took the chance to actually observe a game being played, or even try one. Isn't it about time that computer games were given the same respect as CDs or videos.
Michael Phelan, Yate

After the Colorado tragedy, it was considered vital to find something to blame as quickly as possible. As luck would have it there were three things involved that the 50-something politicians could all unite in condemning: movies, pop music and computer games.

However, the movie and pop industries had already copied the National Rifle Association and hired lawyers and lobbyists to protect them. To persecute them would be hard work and the cheques might stop. It had to be videogames then – everyone already knew they were evil after all – remember that film? What was it? Wargames!

The parents who'd voted for the politicians and the schools and the gun industry were all so pleased that the shooting was nothing to do with them, that they quickly called for strict censorship laws to govern the wicked games industry. No-one lived happily ever after but that wasn't their fault either. Ed



See. Computer games even teach you how to recognise fungi.

COMES ACROSS CORNY

Wing Commander: The Movie has unsurprisingly received a massive thumbs down from US critics. Why do game publishers agree to movie tie-

The Wing Commander Village People's continued success amazed all.

ins? They are always a flop, even if the game was good (Street Fighter, Mortal Kombat, Super Mario Bros. Need I go on?). I realise that the lure of box-office money is too much for executives to pass by, but is it really worth making a complete mockery of what was a good game? What *is* worrying is the promise of films based on Lara Croft and Duke Nukem; these characters will be destroyed on screen by some corny one-liners and a pathetic story line that'll have us all hanging our heads in shame. Who remembers some of the chuckles that you had while playing as Duke Nukem? On the big screen it'll just comes across as corny and make you cringe at lines that were funny on your PC. Making a good film about a game just can't be done, so please don't try

Steve Ellis, Lincoln

The reason why games make such poor films is really due to the second rate directors and writers that make them. Of course, they get hired because the film industry just doesn't take a film inspired by a game seriously. Done well, certain games would make marvellous films. Take the Monkey Island *games for example. The Princess Bride, anybody?* ***Ed***

GREAT BIG HUG

I am angry. Very angry. I read in your *Unreal Tournament* supplement that apparently games players aren't too bothered about a 'linear' series of events. This is wrong. Now, in my opinion, *Unreal* is one of the most incredible, amazing series of linear events there is. It's a huge, staggering, astounding, emotional game that makes me want to give the programmers a great big hug. And then in the interview on issue 69's CD Jay Wilbur *himself* said "Who cares" when talking about story lines. I CARE AND SO DO LOTS OF OTHER PEOPLE! Grrrr. Hearing Epic saying this makes me angry, worried annoyed and, over all, extremely depressed. I hope that tournaments don't take over as I want to see more games with brilliant linear story-lines

Angry, E-mail

At the moment, multi-player games like Unreal Tournament *are mainly about balancing a good deathmatch, which is all that a lot of people want, even with the slight elaboration that* Team Fortress *provides. However, games like* Ultima Online *and* Everquest *(reviewed on page 88) point to an alternative, if a significantly more complicated one. Surely, though, the future for all games lies with evolving story lines that adapt to the choices you make as the player. Games are the only medium that could realise this. Peter Molyneux has some interesting thoughts on the matter in the interview on page 54.* ***Ed***

THE HEAD INJURY

Last year, due to a car accident, I was in the head injury unit of the Mineral Water Hospital that is situated just behind your hallowed building. When I learnt of my nearness of said building I knew that I had to make a pilgrimage to all PC GAMER readers' Mecca. So I did! May I say that even if the inside is a mass of twisting turning tunnels (which I doubt it is!) the outside appeared to be very nice indeed. Anyway I feel much better now that I have been to mine, and many others , heaven

Mick Wright, E-mail

Somehow the phrase "Head Injury" seems to stand out from the text here. Don't ask us why. ***Ed***

MAVERICK COOL PEOPLE

The unfortunate stereotype of a computer gamer is one of a social outcast staring into a monitor for hours on end, with only the furniture for company. It's a stereotype I find very offensive. It's generally accepted in my year at school that *cool* people know nothing of games and *sad* people

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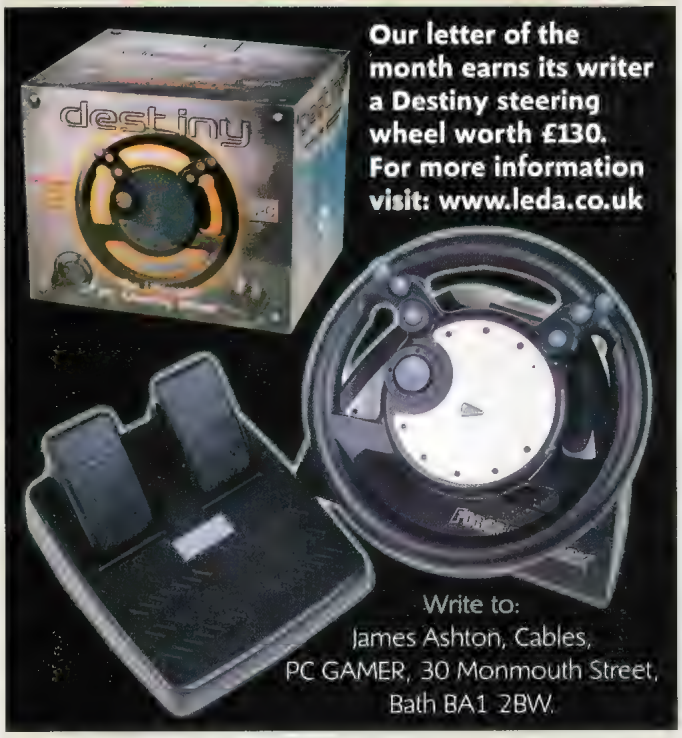

Our letter of the month earns its writer a Destiny steering wheel worth £130. For more information visit: www.leda.co.uk

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Or e-mail cables@futurenet.co.uk

IN SHORT

Who brought the Aliens and Predators together then?
Sean-Paul Lambert, Surrey

Dark Horse wrote some jolly good comics about it. The rest is history. Ed

MONSTRO
MONSTRO
MONSTRO
MONSTRO MON.
STROOOOOOOO!!!!!
Mark Simpson, E-mail

Quite. Ed

Whatever happened to Jonathan Nash?
Peter Parrish, North Yorkshire

He's now a nun in the sacred order of Clementine. And reviews games. Ed

Hugely fat Americans trying to cram defenceless people into their vast buttocks?
Ben Rutherford, E-mail

Erk. Ed

In your *Worms 3* guide you said that the super sheep was useless, but after going up try using the arrow keys (left and right) and you will find that you can control the sheep in flight.
Lee Ansell, E-mail

The most common theme in this month's letters. We're sorry. Ed

IN SHORT

You say the final battle involves you fighting the fully operational Death Star II. This does not tie in with the films.
Karl Niklas, Kent

Yes it does. How do you think it started firing? Ed

Could it be that the staff of GAMER keep their prizes to themselves?
Nick Brigden, Cornwall

Your lack of trust has left Matt in tears. Bow your head. Ed

***Quake II*, *Monkey Island 3*, *F-22: ADF* and *Tomb Raider*. They are all, quite literally, computer games.**

⇨ are the only ones that do. There are a few maverick *cool* people who have conversed with me, in secret, about their gaming activities, but these are a rarity. Although the antisocial nature of excessive computer gaming is universally accepted, rank ignorance runs rife among the self-appointed *cooler* classes of society. How do you feel this situation should be remedied?
Hugh Kikuchi, Edgware

Worrying about what other people think is the first sign of degenerating into one of the 'cool'. Our advice? Publicly and obviously fail to give a toss about what they think. It makes them sooo angry ***Ed***

I FEEL SICK

I feel depressed! I have a reasonable spec PC and have been playing games for years. But... In *Civ II*, why do all my lovely cities get wiped out by the Zulus just after I've signed a non aggression pact? In *Monkey Island 3* I can't solve any puzzles until I use your walkthrough. *Quake II* treats me just as badly. If I don't get killed by the monsters, I get hopelessly lost and have to restart the level. In *F-22: ADF*, if I don't get shot down in flames in a mission, I end up crashing on landing. In *Tomb Raider*, I get so claustrophobic I feel sick and give up. My wife says I should take up knitting, but I'm sure I'll find that too tricky.
Trevor Harris, Bristol

If you do, be careful of those cross stitches. One misplaced needle could take your eye out. I'd stay with PC games if I were you. ***Ed***

MARK OF NINETY

I'm not writing to complain about the games industry, but to praise it. *(A satisfied customer? Frame him. – Basil Fawlty)* If you remember, way back at the start of '98 you wrote a Special Report on how all the decent games were released at Christmas and for the rest of the year there was nothing. But rejoice! Looking at the February, March and April '99 issues I have found 13 titles that received a mark of ninety percent or more by you. This is the same number that you gave ninety percent in the November, December and Christmas '97 issues. This must mean that the games industry is now producing top quality games and releasing them when they're ready instead of delaying them to build up hype (bar *Tiberian Sun*). Hooray!
Jonathan Vaughan, Basingstoke

Funnily enough, it has been a rather sterling spring, hasn't it? As you put it, Hurrah! ***Ed***

OR HUMPHREY BOGART

You know how everyone is using digital actors on films to bring back stars of the 1930s and '40s? Well why don't they do this in new computer games? We could have James Cagney starring in a *Gangsters*-like game, or Humphrey Bogart in a Film Noir adventure. We may even see Marilyn Monroe in an interactive movie. If they have the technology, they might as well use it.
Clive Reames, Exeter

Which is a bit like saying, "They have nukes... they might as well drop them." ***Ed***

IF SEGA CAN

Why doesn't the PC have any beat-'em ups at all (except for *Virtua Fighter*)? Now I know you're going to say that the Japanese have never heard of PCs but that's no excuse. If Sega can make beat 'em-ups for the PC then so can Namco, Capcom and all the rest of 'em. Give us PC owners some good fighting games in the future.
Tom Walker, E-mail

The non-presence of beat-'em-ups on the PC is really due to a mixture of the pad based controls being more suitable for consoles and the fact that everyone thinks that PC owners are serious people who don't buy them. Which seems justified considering the sales of Virtua Fighter ***Ed***

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Blood
Bubble Bobble
Bust a Move 2: Arcade Edition
Caesar 1 & 2
Cannon Fodder
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Championship Manager 97/98
Championship Manager 2
Civilization 1 & 2
Colin McRae Rally
Command & Conquer
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Descent 1 & 2
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Earthworm Jim 1 & 2
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Pitfall
POD
Populous: The Beginning
Premier Manager 1 & 3
Pro Pinball
Quake 1 & 2
Railroad Tycoon 2
Rainbow Islands
Rally Cross
Rayman
Resident Evil 2
Road Rash
Roller Coaster Tycoon
Roll Cage
Screamer 1 & 2
Screamer Rally
Settlers 3
SimCity 2000
Sonic and Nuckles Collection
Sonic 3D Blast
South Park
Star Wars: Rogue Squadron
Street Fighter Alpha
Street Fighter 2
Super Bubsy
Super Tetris
SWIV 3D
Syndicate Wars
Test Drive 1, 2, 4 & Off Road
The Hunt for Red October
Theme Hospital
Theme Park
Time Commando
TOCA Touring Car Champ & 2
Tomb Raider 1 & 2
Toy Story
Triple Play 97, 98 & 99
Turok
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Unreal
US Navy Fighters 1 & 97
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WIN!

A PC. A BIG PC! A VERY BIG PC!

METAL Mickey. He was crap. And the robots from the Smash adverts in the Seventies. Absolutely dreadful. And Marvin the Paranoid Android from Hitchhikers Guide. The giant metallic Mechs from *MechWarrior 3*, however... they're not crap at all. And even if they were, you would never actually say it to their faces because they would pummel you with a burst of missile fire if you even dreamt of dissing them. Not that I would.

Anyway, MicroProse certainly wouldn't want to insult the Mechs Mainly because they're particularly good buddies with our metallic chums. In fact they're such big fans that they've made a whole game about their exploits, telling us all about Thor, Shadowcat and their mates' desperate war at the beginning of the next millennium.

So... what better way to celebrate the return of the Mechs to the PC games world than giving away another equally impressive machine to our beloved readers? None. But, unfortunately, the machine won't have cluster bombs and machine guns. But it will have a jolly fast processor.

HIT THE SPECS, BOB

● The winner will receive one of those top-of-the-line 100-ton assault Mech PCs that we so like to give away. Its Pentium III 500MHz processor throbs with restrained power. Its 128Mb of memory is quite capable of storing the full battle specifications of every known weapon in the year 3000. 12Gb of hard drive space should store, erm, lots of stuff. The 17" monitor should immediately immerse you in digital images of strange distant worlds, which the Voodoo3 3000 card will merrily summon up with the aural accompaniment trilled by the SoundBlaster Live! card, played through a 4-point 3D sound system. The DVD ROM drive will play DVDs. Hey. Have a copy of *MechWarrior 3* too. We really are too generous.

● As much as we'd like it, not everyone can win. So the lucky ten runners up will have a copy of *MechWarrior 3* to make up somewhat for their loss.

You want to win? Then skip over to the question box and step to our funky quiz beat

QUESTION

The "Chunk-chunk-chik-chik" competition

Have the theme from Wagner playing in your head.

One of the best things about *MechWarrior 3* is its sheer sumptuous beauty. And not just graphically... sonically it gently kisses your aural centres with delicate spot effects and pummels them with furious swells of white noise. So to win the delectable prizes, what we want you to do is make a suitable soundtrack for a Mech battle.

Don't panic. It's quite easy. Take a tape recorder. Then make noises into it which would be heard as a giant robots trundling around a futuristic battlefield and engaged in mortal combat. Explosions, radio chatter, the breaking of buildings, ice-cream vans, whatever. Then send it to us. On a tape. The only rule? No samples, bits of records or musical instruments are allowed. Except for the kazoo. Bar that, anything else goes. Mark is especially fond of the sound of frying pans.

So... the GAMER tape player is waiting hungrily. Get going

Send this coupon, with answers, to: The "Chunk-chunk-chik-chik" Contest, PC GAMER, 29 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2DL, to arrive by 31st July.

My terrifying tape of metallic noise is the best you've heard. Send my prize, under heavily armed guard, to:

Name _____

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_____

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_____

My most wanted

This bit's optional, but we'd like you to let us know the five forthcoming PC games you're most looking forward to, to aid us in compiling our Readers' Most Wanted chart.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

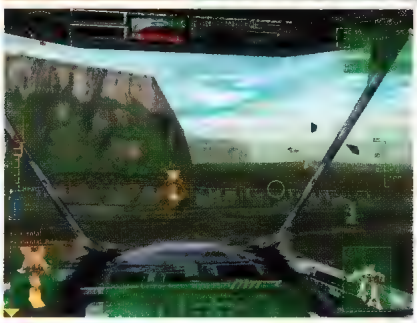
5 _____

RULES

1. Employees of MicroProse or Future Publishing are not allowed to enter.
2. Entries arriving after 31st July will be seen but not heard.
3. Multiple entries will cost you a small fortune in blank tapes, the advice against them.
4. The Editor's decision is final. So there's no point barracking at him if your entry isn't a winning one.

(Above) Track of my tears. Or tracks that tear across the landscape. Y'know.

Step into the light, my children. Step into the light.



Chainguns are the weapon of choice for gentlemen.

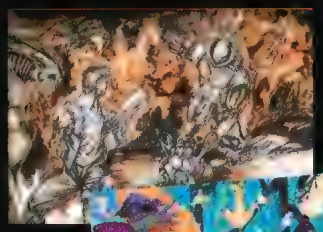
COMPETITION WINNERS

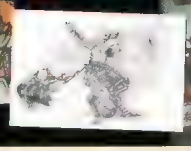
ALIENS VS PREDATOR

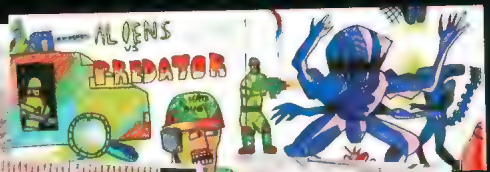
THE WINNER

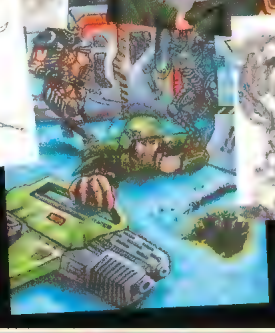
Chris Fisher, Southsea
Why? Because Chris managed to overcome his limited artistic skills with the sheer power of ideas. A see-through Predator. Little red LEDs flashing. Clever post-modern comment. Chris had them all. Well done.

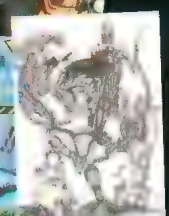
THE BEST OF THE REST











THE RUNNERS-UP

This is perhaps the biggest compo we've ever had. Over 200 people sent us their drawings of aliens and predators doing horrible things to each other. So what have we learnt? Well, frankly we wouldn't want to get stuck in a lift with some of you and your disturbing imaginations. Besides, we think there would be only one winner, we were looking to [illegible] a piece of some description. So who are they? Well it won't be any of the pedestrian who just stared out images from the comic book. And, sadly, it won't be the "I'm going to get you!" entry.

But it will be the following: Jon Hilliker from Burtonwood for his Predators very posing pouch; Robert Mills from High Wycombe for scaring us; Kash Amin from Bromsgrove for his brilliant effort; Lee Beresford from Stanley (for the artistic anyway) and the hermaphrodite environment of Dean Chick from London (who will be grabbing his testicles knowing that he came second).

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GUIDELINES

THIS MONTH!

I thought I was hard. I thought I was good at games. And then I found out. Compared to this man, I am but a small child with questionable manual dexterity. Who is this creature? James Flynn. Why's he so good? Because he's spent the entire month mastering three of the hardest games ever: *X-Wing Alliance, Aliens vs Predator* and *Civilization: Call To Power*. I don't consider myself worthy to share an office with him, so it's a good job he's left. Phew.

KIERON GILLEN

COMPLETE GUIDE - PART 2

X-WING ALLIANCE

If you've made it through the first 25 *X-Wing Alliance* missions, congratulations. You'll be pleased to know that the second half, while frequently more difficult, offers new challenges and more dramatic settings.

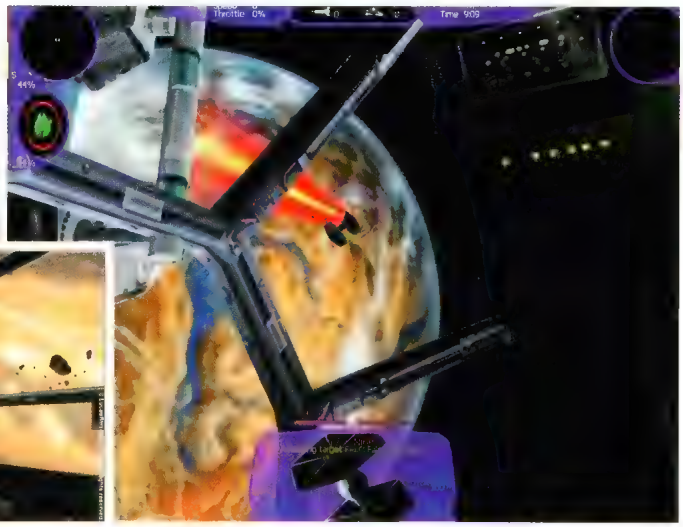
By JAMES FLYNN

1 BATTLE 3, MISSION 3

RECON IMPERIAL RESEARCH FACILITY
DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

This sees you flying inside a large Research Facility. The comm satellites you must get rid of are above and below the station designated 33/1 and 34/1 so bookmark them when you arrive and take them out first

You should ignore the gunships for now and just keep your speed up, taking out the laser turrets. Then assess the situation and get your wingmen to attack the station. When asked to find blast doors be aware that this is like finding grey on grey and requires some luck. They are on the middle section and are a small hatch that doesn't take too much to knock out. Move inside, keep tabs on the exit and dump everything to engines when leaving



Five engines? He's showing off. Stick a banana up one of them for a comic back-firing accident.

BATTLE 3, MISSION 4

INVESTIGATE IMPERIAL COMMUNICATIONS ARRAY
DIFFICULTY: EASY

TIEs are no match for the A Wing you have in this mission, so just have a laugh racking up some points. Bookmark the Python when it arrives and stay close to it. The only way you're likely to fail this mission is to allow the TIE Bombers to hit the Python. Take them out as soon as they arrive but if there are craft on your tail, beware of flying slow and straight. Destroy the hangar for a bonus

BATTLE 3, MISSION 5

PLANT LISTENING DEVICE
DIFFICULTY: HARD

This one's frustrating to repeat because it takes so long before you are actually in any danger. Deal with all the boring mines first (again) but leave the mine layer unless you fancy a scrap for a measly bonus. You should take out all the mines before going near Comsat 6 which is 24-1 on your map at the start. There are six satellites but when you inspect Comsat 6, Aeron will leap out of the airlock. This is where it gets

FOUL PLAY

X-WING ALLIANCE

If there's one problem with this game, it's that all too often you're one of Luke's wingmen who dies in a blast of TIE fighter fire, rather than the chap who manages to trust in the Force and drops a proton torpedo down a rather small hole. Metaphorically. Perhaps this bug-exploitation, which only works in unpatched Alliance V1.00, will be of some assistance.

Press ESC and go to general options. Find the preset values for F11 and F12. Set the Beam Level to nought. This will only work if you're flying a ship without a beam weapon installed. When on a mission slam down on the edited pre-set key. It moves energy from your non-existent beam weapon system to your engines, giving you an edge on slower fighters.

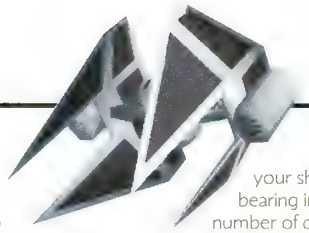
Or alternatively type IAMACHEATER to activate the cheats. Among the following codes:

EWOKSMALL – Invulnerability
MASTERYODA – Infinite ammo
KILLMENOW – Fail level
THETASTESTVICTORY – Complete level

JIMMY WHITE'S 2: CUEBALL

We're big fans of the snooker, here at GAMER. When thrown with sufficient force it's quite capable of knocking an opponent off balance so you can finish them off with a roundhouse with the cue itself. Hoof huh, y'see.

But the game... well, just wander around the room and behind the grandfather clock. You'll notice a tiny mousehole. Rather than running off to complain to the barman about the state of his pub, just click on the bobbin of thread in the hole. A sign will appear stating "Cheat Enabled". When you leave the mousehole you'll find all the players, including living legend Jimmy White, accessible in the roster of both sports.



nard. Move closer to Aeron, set shields and lasers to maximum, recharge a little and keep the map handy in 2D mode. A transport will arrive and drop Zero G Stormtroopers off in
70 bunches of four and you must stop them reaching Aeron or destroying the satellite

The transport moves around in an arc and you have to close with the Stormtroopers it drops off asap. Set turret to fire at current target (this is vital) and using the R then F keys repeatedly target the well armed Stormtroopers. The
80 Omega group goes after you so you may like to leave them till later just keep an eye on the map and head off the final couple of groups Make sure you pick Aeron up before you leave (you can normally just fly into her) and don't get too distracted by the incoming TIEs

90 BATTLE 3, MISSION 6

RENDEZVOUS WITH DEFECTOR
DIFFICULTY: HARD

Win the very simple dogfight after the boring flight to the outpost. ID the departing shuttles until you locate the Defector and stay close to him (within 0.30), escorting him
100 back to the Liberty. Let the other shuttles go. Make sure you recharge your systems. After the shuttle docks with the Frigate, an exciting (if somewhat implausible) battle ensues as a Star Destroyer and Interdictor arrives. Target the Interdictor with your proton torpedoes as soon as possible and preferably dumb-fire them (no
110 lock). The frigate can't leave until it is out of action

Depending on the state of your ship but always bearing in mind the huge number of decent TIEs in the area, my strong advice would be to head back to the Liberty and rearm. If you stay in there for more than about ten seconds, your hull
120 will be repaired and shields will be fully recharged. Head back out and concentrate on staying alive and taking pot shots, which isn't that easy given that there are so many TIEs about

BATTLE 3, MISSION 7

SCRAMBLE!
130 DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

A traitor has escaped and it's up to you to get him back in your A Wing. You want to disable the shuttle asap so devote all power to engines and reduce his hull to <50%. Take out homing mines, then dogfight for a while and bookmark the Assault Transport as it arrives – stay close to it once
140 again. Target every bomber possible with your concussion missiles and stop them launching the torpedoes. You must stop at least one complete wave to stand a chance, but it's not too hard

BATTLE 4, MISSION 1

SHIPMENT TO MINING COLONY
150 DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

One of the best missions in the game but long and somewhat confusing in places. Set Emkay and the turret to fire at current target and use R then F to activate him repeatedly. Get rid of all the first wave of slow ships. Your freighters will be loading up now and making
160 for hyperspace, but a Modified Corvette (M-CRV) stands in their way so you must take it out Luckily your shields are decent and Emkay can always hit it as you fly by. You'll take some serious damage but don't worry about it for now just destroy it quickly. You really want to take out the central gas facility as well for a *huge*
170 and thoroughly undeserved bonus. Hyperspace out, make sure you have some shields left, and board the base.

BATTLE 4, MISSION 2

RECONNAISSANCE OF IMPERIAL CONVOY
DIFFICULTY: EASY

180 Quite fun and easy this one – you don't have to fire your weapons once. Get up to maximum speed (180) and stay there or thereabouts for the entire mission. You have to ID all the convoy craft (not the Star Destroyers, etc.) which are hypering out of the area. Start to the left and try to inspect them roughly in order. There are a
190 couple of things to bear in mind here. The easiest way to inspect the long, worm-like containers is to fly from one end to the other tapping the T key as you ID each one You're bound to miss a couple of ships as you gad about, so keep an eye on the HUD and hit T to locate your next target. If one is about to enter hyperspace, make it
200 your priority.

BATTLE 4, MISSION 3

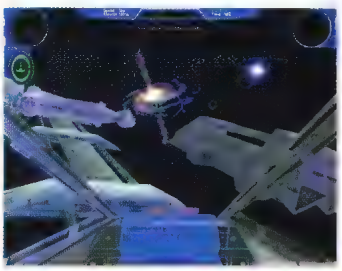
MINING COLONY UNDER SIEGE: RESCUE AERON
DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

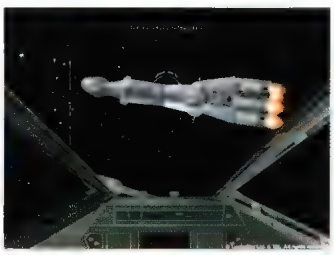
Darth Vader's somewhat large ship, the Executor, pitches up here but
210 doesn't do a great deal. To win, make sure you get to the station with your shields relatively intact Fly there fast, taking out any ships which come straight at you (there's sometimes a single TIE). Bookmark the base and fly at it quickly, jinking about with Emkay set to fire at current target (which should be all the TIEs on your tail). Take out any
220 missiles coming at you but don't turn around – let Emkay do it When docking, switch to the gun turret yourself, set lasers and shields to max and fire almost constantly at a target. When you have Aeron just run for it

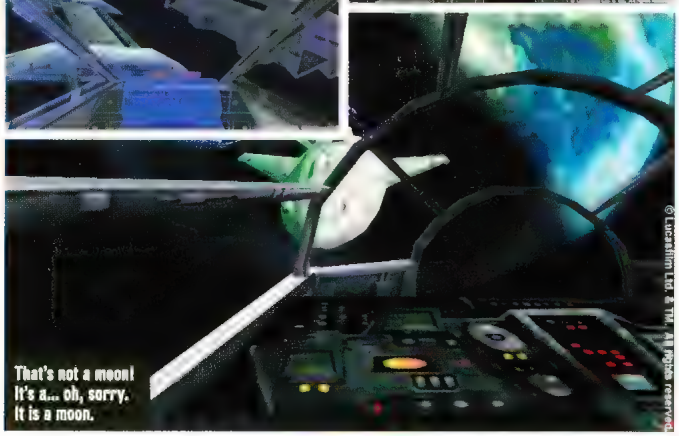
BATTLE 4, MISSION 4

230 CAPTURE THE FREIGHTER SUPROSA
DIFFICULTY: EASY

Disabling the freighter is very easy,







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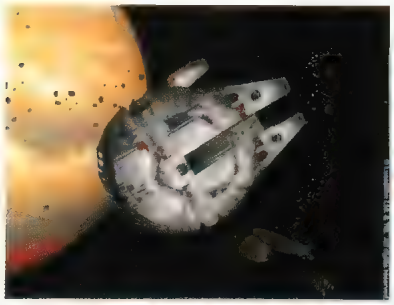


No-one likes the Y-Wing. Not even their mum.

but after that you'll be faced with destroying an Interdictor alone Keep your speed above 80 and make repeated runs with lasers and ion cannons together. Interdictor shields are surprisingly weak throughout the game and it shouldn't take too long if you realise that you're very safe on the 'far' side of the Interdictor Try not to lose your fellow Y-Wings

BATTLE 4, MISSION 5

ABANDON REBEL BASE AT KOTHIS
DIFFICULTY: EASY

Here you need to defend the mperial Computer first on the Shuttle and then on the Corvette Plus the Liberty must escape. It's a pure and simple dogfight where you should concentrate on the TIE Bombers when they arrive. The main thing to be aware of is letting the situation get out of hand by not killing the craft fast enough. As for most battles, keep the lasers on single fire. Keep tabs on the TIE Advanced, particularly when running for the hyperspace buoy and bookmark the Razor when it arrives. Have another huge dogfight when the Star Destroyer appears Bookmark the escape pod when it launches and beware the groups of TIE Bombers (Beta group) that will try and take it out You should be able to deal with them if you make sure you are always near the escape pod

This is a long mission and the next part sees you accompanying the Mercury as the pod transfers to the Independence. There are about six waves of TIE Bombers which aunch, so make them your primary target with your photon torpedoes. Target one from an advantageous angle and if it hits, you should annihilate the entire wave. Which is very satisfying There are always a couple of TIE Interceptors which directly target you and this is usually the Sigma group so be especially aware of where they are. After you destroy the 38-x group of TIE Bombers just stay out of trouble by putting everything into engines

BATTLE 4, MISSION 6

PROTECT IMPERIAL COMPUTER
DIFFICULTY: HARD

Destroy the gunboats very quickly

BATTLE 5, MISSION 1

PROTECT ALLIANCE-SMUGGLER MEETING
DIFFICULTY: HARD

After the longest briefing ever you must endure the misery of flying the Z-95; and also the laughably bad Rastafarian accent. Anyway, you'll be ambushed twice during the mission but do your utmost to save the superb advanced concussion missiles for the second Imperial assault. Use them on the missile-firing gunboats but don't let the Scout Transport get too close to the boarded vessels. It's a hard mission because of the scrap metal you're strapped into, but try to keep your speed up and do your best with the five Imperial ships It doesn't seem to matter if you die as long as the boarding is complete

BATTLE 5, MISSION 2

ATTACK IMPERIAL CONVOY
DIFFICULTY: HARD

Beware: you can only disable craft here, but you have a more pressing problem The Hurrim will attack the civilians and you have to take out the Hurrim Speed is crucial so follow one Hurrim in close behind and, as soon as they start firing, let rip Move from Hurrim ship to ship with cannons and lasers and keep going until they are gone. Resist the temptation to use your wingmen here. Ignore the ship which has made a run for it because it never leaves. You can assign your wingmen to attack it but they're so useless it won't do much good

Bookmark Render 1 and move close to it as TIEs and (sometimes) the Skipspray Blastboats will move to destroy it They always attack this one first and you have to break them off their attack runs repeatedly. There aren't too many enemy ships but they're all dangerous to Render 1 After they're all gone disable the remaining convoy ship which is wandering about and wait for the transport to pick it up and leave

FOUL PLAY

COMMANDOS: BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

Perhaps the originator of the soldier-uses-various-gadgetry-to-complete-missions genre, this mission pack certainly hasn't given you some more horrendously frustrating missions to put between your teeth like a serrated commando dagger. Knowing how hard it is, some cheats and solutions seem in order.

The Asphalt Jungle – BIG3E
Dropped out of the Sky – 9E2RC
That's Hammer – 4AQ7F
Guess who's coming tonight – 4HLA3
Eagles Nest – 8T7N4
The Great Escape – UAK3L
Dangerous Intentions – DUN1

Cheating Scot Wait just 'til you get HAMMERTIME and all those Jerries are fallers by the way! To make the cheat modes accessible: Then use the following to activate your ill-gotten powers.

CTRL and 1 – Invincibility
F9 – Mouse information
SHIFT and 9 – Teleport to mouse cursor
CTRL and SHIFT and 0 – Complete mission
SHIFT and F9 – Free your Commandos

Alternatively, find the commandos.cfg and add the line '-DEVELOP 1'. This allows you to use the following key combinations for cheats.

SHIFT and 9 – Teleport to mouse cursor
CTRL and 1 – Invincibility
CTRL SHIFT and 0 – Complete mission

HALF-LIFE

Some of you are still having problems using the first set of cheats we provided you with. Some have even gone so far as to suggest they're absolutely broken and will never work. Wrong. Dead wrong. Dead wrong. Dead

FOUL PLAY

HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC 3

Imagine this, if you will. Frodo and his Hobbit chums are wandering their way towards Rivendell. All of a sudden, a Black Rider Nazgul sort just leaps out and starts threatening the ringbearers. Erk. What on earth do they do? Well... we can be sure their struggle would be less heroic and interesting if by doing a curious dance they could make the Nazgul disappear, eh!

Anyway, some cheats.

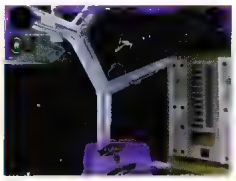
Just press Tab then type in the codes to gain the bonus.

nwcarryonwayward – Add 5 of all buildings to your castle
nwcarrydon – Automatic loss
nwctowinalot – Automatic success
nwcaaaboggartgo – Gain an extra 10 archangels
nwcaaaach – Gain a load of ballista and ammo
nwcleadbetter – Increase hero level by one
nwccastlebuttress – Boost hero luck to max
nwccomeon – Infinite move for hero
nwcmuchmoolah – Boost hero morale to max
nwcalreadygotone – Display full hidden map
nwcgimmeddirection – Display full map
nwcalotofdosh – Boost all sources
nwctide – Gains all magic and 999 spell points
nwcfleshwound – Gains Death Knights
nwcpickanyone – Brighter colours

TOCA 2

It's finally managed to reach the shops. A Good Thing. Because now you too can share in the joy of full-on Touring Car action. And after such a long wait, I bet you're just dying to cheat in it.

Type [illegible] as your name. Your old mate Tiff will state "Ghost Mode Enabled" and suddenly you'll be able to drive in a top-down view. Also try entering your name as HANGOVER to make everything a little wobbly around the edges. Or alternatively just drink a few [illegible] and load up the game.



BATTLE 5, MISSION 3

BREAK EMON OUT OF BRIG
DIFFICULTY: EASY

The container you want here is always in the top-right group as
370 you enter the map in the top row, second in from the left. Make straight for it and just follow the instructions. Set Emkay to fire at current target and target the ships but remember there is also a System Patrol Craft you have to destroy before the Deadman's Hand can leave the station. After that, just head for the nav buoy
380

BATTLE 5, MISSION 4

PROTECT SMUGGLER RETREAT
DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

Here's a mission where, more than most, it's all too easy to get drawn away from your escort. At the start just move towards the station and
390 sit between it and the incoming proton torpedoes. Take as many out as you can and it will greatly extend the station's life. When the shuttle Orion launches stay close to it and watch for the two TIE Interceptors that attack. Once it's safe, move to engage TIE Bombers with proton torpedoes from a nice angle and you should be wiping
400 out six at a time. If the Strike Cruiser is destroyed, there is a major bonus, but you shouldn't worry about it too much.

BATTLE 5, MISSION 5

PROTECT ALLIANCE-SMUGGLER MEETING
DIFFICULTY: HARD

410 Again you're defending a shuttle craft, this time from eight Hurrim ships closing from the right. Bookmark the shuttle. Take a couple of Hurrim out at first but don't let the rest get a lock on you from behind. Then check the shuttle on the map – there will probably be four Hurrim craft chasing it down. Target them on
420 the map, switch back to visual and chase them down – you have to be fast.

The primary aim here is not to kill them but make them abort their attack runs, so if one turns away, just target another until it does – at this stage you're there to protect the shuttle, not score points. Another couple of waves
430 will close in and you should use your concussion missiles here again. Finish them off and enter hyperspace with the shuttle. A couple more will engage but there should be no problems here if you stay close to the shuttle and keep an eye on the map.

BATTLE 5, MISSION 6

440

RECOVER FAMILY DATACORE
DIFFICULTY: EASY

The datacore is in one of the small containers on the far side of the station. The defending T-Wings are very weak so take them out with Emkay's help. To transfer the

DIDN'T HE DO WELL...!

Where did you end up then? Here are the ranks which can be earned in the game by scoring points in the missions. Obviously, you'll get lots more if you never use the simulator. I just scraped into Commander, which was all right I suppose.

0 – Recruit	17500 – Lieutenant JG	41000 – Lt Commander
100 – Flight Cadet	25000 – Lieutenant	52000 – Commander
10000 – Flight Officer	33000 – Captain	65000 – General

(Right) The Star Wars Trivial Pursuit game was going well.

collected datacore just dock with the Andastra, and it's worth remembering that all you have to do to pick up Emkay is fly into him, so don't slow down and get shot not if it gets hit by multiple Skipspray Blastboats (S/B) at the start. Make the S/Bs abort their first bombing run at all costs. They're tough so you won't kill them immediately, but you can get them to turn away

2) The Shuttle Jade should be well on its way now and there will be three ships heading after it. Chase it down at full speed and distract them. Destroy them to be on the safe side, but the Liberty will help you out here.

3) Don't rearm at the Liberty, even if you're right by the bay. It may seem like a good idea, but it isn't.

4) Head back at high speed toward the M/CRV and Tal'cara. Engage the S/Bs again and avoid flying slowly near the dangerous Corvette. After a few minutes the number of S/Bs should no longer be threatening the Tal'cara

5) Bookmark the escape pod when it appears and stay near it. As soon as a message arrives saying '1 new S/B' target that with the U key and check the HUD – it should say "Looking for craft to pick up" or something similar Destroy it immediately.

6) The Jade will now be on the way back so move back over to defend it, using remaining torpedoes to get them to abort their run if necessary

7) Protect the Shuttle Compassion – use the map to see which ships are vectoring in on it.

BATTLE 5, MISSION 7

ATTACK PIRATE BASE
DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

Take the laser batteries out with proton torpedoes or, if you're feeling brave enough, lasers. Dumb-fire the torpedoes, though. There are also guns mounted on the platform points and on the central walls of the platform. Remove the easy ones but make sure you keep your shields as high as possible When the platform is disabled locate and disable Nakhym's fleeing shuttle quickly.

When the Star Destroyer arrives it can be destroyed relatively easily, particularly if you have proton torpedoes left. It will launch lots of TIEs, so I'd make it your (and your wingmen's) priority from the start. Take it out quickly and you'll only have a few to deal with Note that this mission is another that is bugged and you shouldn't interfere with your wingmen until the laser turrets are 100% destroyed at the start

BATTLE 6, MISSION 1

MEET WITH BOTHAN DELEGATION
DIFFICULTY: VERY HARD

A seemingly simple mission where you have to protect the Borsk Fey'lya and the shuttle Jade (for starters). The trouble in this mission is there is a ridiculous number of enemy ships that appear at staggered times and multiple craft which you must protect. After lengthy experimentation this is undoubtedly the best way to complete this one. Do these in strict order and fast You can also use bookmarks to help orientate yourself. For example:

F5=Jade
F6=Ta cara
F7=Escape pod

1) The first ship which is vulnerable throughout the mission is the Tal'cara. It can take out the powerful M/CRV on its own but

BATTLE 6, MISSION 2

LOCATE MERCENARY BASE
DIFFICULTY: VERY EASY

Probably the easiest mission in the game. It's split into four parts. For Part 1 just dock and fight them off In Part 2 just increase your speed and use Emkay to fight them off Part 3 is the same as 1 but you can recharge your shields before docking should you wish. In Part 4 just inspect the base and leave

BATTLE 6, MISSION 3

RAID MERCENARY BASE
DIFFICULTY: HARD

A fun dogfighting mission, but it can be frustrating. Fly straight for ten seconds and launch all proton torpedoes in dual fire, dumb fire mode at the Redhawk Break off right and destroy two fleeing ships. Dogfight until 77% of mercenary ships register as destroyed – do not destroy the last laser turret. Recharge shields and finish off the turrets. Bookmark the Otana and make sure you know where the M/CRV Plague is at all times. There will be some faffing about which you shouldn't worry about until the S/Bs arrive Hit them hard and fast and

FOUL PLAY

WARZONE 2100

Clichéd introductions to games: "1 in a continuing series. "Wot, what is it good for? Absolutely nothing," stated Edwin Starr manfully in the early Seventies before adding a suitably gruntsome "Huh". We clearly never experienced the joys of this 3D RTS.

To [illegible] press T, enter the code then slam down on the mid ENTER button. Oh yes you have to apply Patch 1.01 for these to work.

time supply – [illegible]
mission time
get all my land – Kills all enemy units
show me the power – [illegible] extra power
hallo mein schatz – Skip mission
work harder – Finishes everything that's being researched
double up – Doubles toughness of your units
timedemo – Gives frame rate
kill selected – Kills any selected units
easy – Easy difficulty level
normal – Normal difficulty level
hard – Hard difficulty level
version – Game completion date

In an exciting fight, be careful not to sit in space. It's bad.

FOUL PLAY

BALDUR'S GATE

After two months frankly scarily large list of cheats, you probably believed that the mighty sword of Baldur's Gate cheats has been plucked at not a single follicle dexterity in here. You would be wrong. We have another to make your fec slaying even more efficient.

Find a place where someone who keeps potions is located beside a chap who'll gladly sell them to you (in this bug will encumber you to could levels as making it impossible to move). Make sure you only have two potions in your entire inventory. Left-click on one potion in your inventory and choose the drink option. Repeat, and as soon as you drink it the second time pick it up and walk until it disappears. Put the potion down and select the drink option again. Then pick up the potion again. Wait until 535 appears, then put the potion back down and return to the game. Chat to the person who'll purchase potions, then tell him the whole lot for a cool million coins.

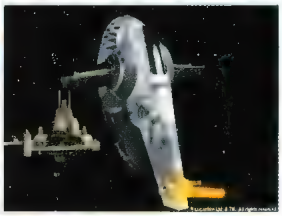
REQUIEM: AVENGING ANGEL

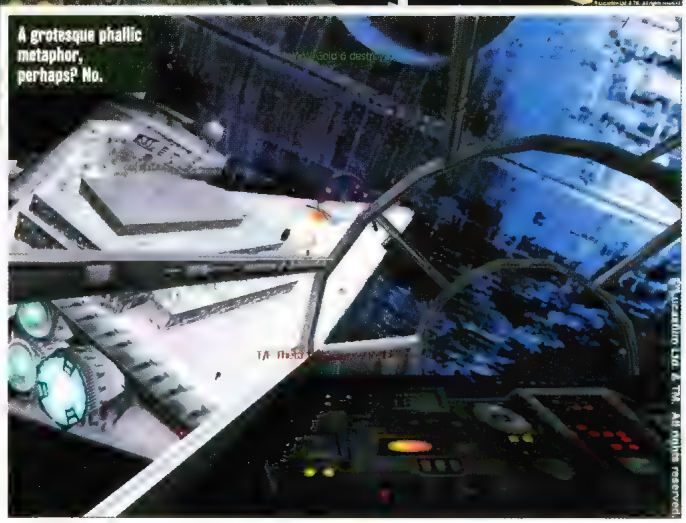
Before I leave basic grammatical skills ("this has actually happened" – An Incredulous Stud) one of my favourite regularly occurring typos in my mail was misspelling 'cheat' and 'cheats', which somewhat ups the rather humorous image of a particularly serious equilibrium to defend earth from a horde of demons. To me anyhow.

(Embarrassed pause) Ah – cheat then?

Press ENTER to bring up the console window, then use a – tat to a code to gain the cheat.

cmaxlives – Enable all cheat codes
cmaxpower – Max psionic pow
cshowai – Another method pau
cshowall – Map around and health
cshowfx – Max health
cspeed – All items
cspells – Max psionic
cspeed – Every spe
csythes – The eventually God mode





protect the Otana. I'd
590 recommend running like hel back to the Liberty at this point because it's possible for the Plaque to take out the Otana after you have 'won' the mission

BATTLE 6, MISSION 4

RESCUE BOTHAN SPIES

600 **DIFFICULTY: HARD**

Ignore the Interdictor to begin with. Rather, dogfight frantically until all the TIE Fighters and Interceptors are destroyed. When they're gone, ID the three Bothan ships (the three nearest the Star Destroyer). Then drive off the Interdictor with some torpedoes and high speed laser passes and
610 keep your shields high. Take your time here if you like – just keep your speed up. Next, be prepared to kill the TIE Bombers that launch. If you have torpedoes left, use them, but be prepared to chase and shoot down any torpedoes that they fire. The last part is fairly easy – just keep moving fast so the S/D
620 can't get a lock on you

BATTLE 6, MISSION 5

STEAL IMPERIAL SHUTTLE

DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

A long mission that you can only fail right at the very end. Get to the Imperial station and board it
630 (Shift+D). ID the Tyderium and bookmark it as you sit in the hangar waiting for the commandos to take it over. Leave on their cue and call reinforcements (Tab+9+Space) but fly away from the area with Emkay firing at the chasing TIEs. Ask Rogue to cover you. Flick to the shuttle for a second every so
640 often and when it launches swoop back to it at high speed. Target the new Gamma squadron of bombers with the U key and make them your sole concern. Take out the waves of Gamma and head home

BATTLE 6, MISSION 6

650 **ESCORT REBEL FLEET**

DIFFICULTY: HARD

It's a long haul, but success starts by loading torpedoes at the start instead of concussion missiles. You should also go for the A-Wing over the X-Wing any time. Punch your way through the oncoming wave of TIEs as you fly into the map – don't engage
660 them. You want to concentrate on the TIE bombers for now and that's all. Target the first bomber with a proton, get lock and make sure it hits (it should take them all out in one). Do the same for the second group. Now head back towards Defiance (don't dogfight the others at all) and engage the gunboats.
670 If you've stopped the bombers, the Defiance will be safe so just stay sharp and try to leave as soon after the Defiance does. When back near Liberty, don't rearm. Put all power to engines and head for the tougher Independence section. When you arrive take a look at the map and break right so you're
680 coming in front of Independence toward TIE Bombers. It's assaulted by waves of 18 TIE Bombers and you have to take them out.

Make sure the first wave is destroyed with a torpedo and go after the second. You may have to fire without a lock on the second group this is hard but it is vital you aren't too close or you'll kill yourself. After the
690 second wave there is a bomber break you might as well head back to the Independence to rearm and reshield as your score will already be huge. Then head back out and engage the remaining waves of bombers. You should come away with 9,000 points or so.

BATTLE 6, MISSION 7

700

FAMILY REUNION

DIFFICULTY: HARD

Note the Shuttle Tyderium arriving as you depart here. Listen to the boring story again as you sit there and fly to Kessel and dock. Wait for the double cross and start flying away from fighters while Emkay takes them out. When

Durian arrives head for the hyperspace buoy. Part two of the mission sees a host of laser batteries and a Star Destroyer II blocking your escape. Your chums will vaguely follow you so head out to the right to take the lasers out of the equation. Engage the waves of TIEs (using Emkay liberally) and then move forward as the next lot close. You should be able to run for the hyperspace buoy by the third or fourth wave

BATTLE OF ENDOR

PHASE 1
DIFFICULTY: EASY

This is the one where you get to fly the Millennium Falcon. You have to protect the medical frigate Redemption, so stay close to it and use your gunner to help you out. You might as well keep lasers set to max and shields to 75% as you never have to move far

THAT THING'S OPERATIONAL!

PHASE 2
DIFFICULTY: EASY

Just target the two ball shaped shield generators on the top of the bridge toward the read of the Executor. Fire continuously while making your runs and target the nearest craft while turning. There is a time limit, but it shouldn't be any problem.

THE SHIELD IS DOWN!

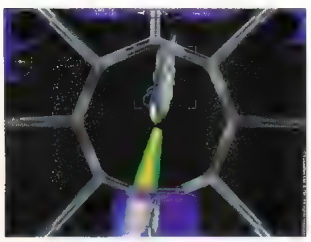
PHASE 3
DIFFICULTY: EASY

In this mission you just have to dogfight manically and use your gunner. Set lasers to max and shields to 25% so you have a little more speed. The only problem here is that you have to reach the rally point at the end of the mission – be prepared to put engines to 100%

DEATH STAR TUNNEL RUN

PHASE 4
DIFFICULTY: VERY HARD

This is an amazing looking leve



but quite weird to play as it requires you to be acutely aware of the size and speed of your ship. Don't slow down as there are always ships close on your tail. Here's how to play each section

1) When flying down the first set of tunnels set lasers to maximum and shields to 25% The TIEs will catch up a little but there's no way they'll ever kill you. This way you can shoot the girders easily and have power left. Take the left turn at the start

2) Hit the tractor beam dead centre and don't try to steer

3) When you come to the bifurcation (assuming you're still the right way up), the left tunnel heads towards the laser and is larger The right leads to the reactor. It's entirely up to you if you take the laser bonus on – you'll still have to do the other one.

4) When flying towards the laser, set shields and lasers to 100% and crawl along. To destroy the laser lens, lock onto it and either use missiles or shoot a few times Enter the cavern, stay level and fly around the *outside* until the laser fires and then go back through the entrance

5) To take out the Zero G Stormtroopers in the large cavern at the end of the narrow passage use the familiar R then F and circle slowly. Then enter the tunnel with the pipes

6) After these pipes is the most critical part of the mission in many ways. You should destroy as many of the girders that are blocking the passage as possible, as you'll be coming back down here at full speed later

7) To destroy the reactor, the power regulator must first be taken out (the hull will reduce to 75%). Then use the target sub-system (comma) key and target the reactor. I'd recommend recharging shields and lasers fully at this point, even though it may take a while. Line yourself up with the exit, launch two missiles and put everything into the engines

8) To make your final escape, fly at *full speed* until you reach the pipes Then allocate 75% to lasers and take it relatively carefully, especially by the sharp kinks nearer the end of the pipes. As you exit the pipe section you should be far enough ahead of the fireball so just shoot the pipes out and leave quietly.

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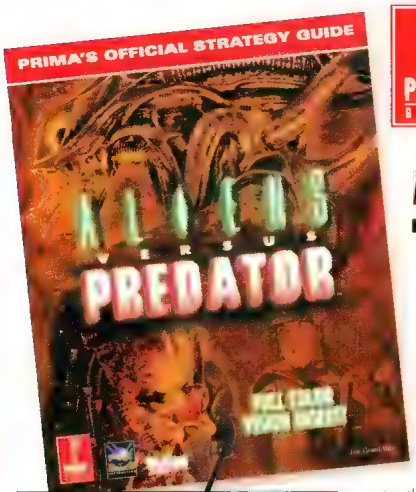
PLAYING GUIDE - PART 1

ALIENS VS PREDATOR

Those lovely people at Prima have allowed us to print some of the tips from their official *AvP* strategy guide. Part one of a three-part series.

By JOE GRANT BELL



The official *Aliens vs Predator* strategy guide, complete with walkthroughs of every level, is on sale now priced £15.99 at Electronics Boutique and all good retailers.

MARINES

Colonial Marines are hard-bitten human soldiers. They fight not for a country or political allegiance, but for the "Company", their employer. Although not as fast or as durable as their enemies, their best weapons are potent enough to kill a foe almost instantly. Thus, the Marine must always strive to spot enemies from long range, either before or at the same time the enemy sees him, to buy a few seconds to discharge that powerful weaponry.

Playing as the Marine, you can't be as wild and unpredictable as the Alien, but if your awareness and aim are both good, you stand a great chance of killing any enemy you encounter.

OVERVIEW

The Colonial Marine lacks the Alien's vast mobility and the Predator's durability and cloaking. Although he can use Flares and an Image Intensifier to augment his view of the world around him, neither solution is perfect, and neither highlights enemies as do the Alien's default vision mode or the Predator's specialised vision modes.

The Colonial Marine's one great advantage is his arsenal. The Marine can carry a wide range of weapons, and there isn't a useless one among them. His best weapons can shred an enemy in a millisecond, but even the weakest possesses great punch.

ADVANTAGE: WEAPONS

The Alien is fast but has no long
1 range attacks. The Predator is durable and has long-range attacks, but can't quite match the power and scope of the Marine's weapons. From the lowly Pulse Rifle to the deadly Minigun, these weapons are hard to beat.

But because the Marine actually must possess the weapons
10 to benefit from them, he must spend more time exploring his surroundings than other species. Missing a key weapon in a dark corner will reduce his effectiveness greatly.

Marines' weapons are their greatest assets.

DISADVANTAGE: SPEED

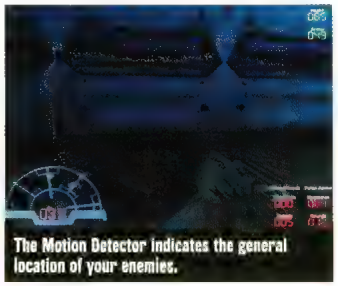
There's no question about it. The Marine is slower than both the Alien
20 and Predator. He must compensate for this lack of mobility with potent munitions and tactical knowledge.

The Marine must understand his limitations. Fleeing from an enemy can be a good tactic, but only if the Marine runs backward while firing at his pursuer, or drops Proximity Mines to cover his tracks. Actually getting away from a
30 determined Alien or Predator is unlikely; instead, the Marine should view running as a way to buy time for a clean shot.

ADVANTAGE: MOTION DETECTOR

The Marine's Motion Detector displays moving enemies within a 180-degree frontal arc. When you
40 play as the Marine you must spin around occasionally to see what's moving in all directions.

Enemies appear on the Motion Detector as blinking dots. If there are multiple enemies, or if enemies lurk above or below the Marine's position, the Detector can be tricky to read. In such cases, it's
50 sometimes better to pay more attention to the environment than to the Detector. It's possible to miss an Alien leaping right for your face because you were too busy reading dots on the Motion Detector.



The Motion Detector indicates the general location of your enemies.

DISADVANTAGE: LIMITED VISION

Human optical perception requires visible light. The Marine carries Flares
60 to illuminate dimly lit areas, and an Image Intensifier for total darkness. Even with these aids, however, the Marine's vision isn't perfect.

The Marine's unlimited supply of Flares is useful in shadowy spots, but only four can be active at any one time, and by throwing them the Marine reveals his general position. Furthermore, there's an art to
70 throwing Flares. Throwing a Flare into a recessed corner can generate shadows that are almost as pronounced as the darkness.

Flares are crucial for lighting dark areas.

The Image Intensifier, on the other hand, is useful in pitch blackness, but a bad idea if there's any ambient light. Even the muzzle flash from the Marine's own weapons can wash out the Image Intensifier, creating areas of intense brightness that interfere with vision.

The Marine must use Flares and the Image Intensifier in conjunction with the Motion Detector to gain full awareness of his surroundings.

WEAPONS

You've learned that the Marine is slow, that he's only moderately armoured, and that dark areas can cause him trouble. But weapons are the Marine's saving grace. The following sections rate each weapon in several categories.

"Power" is a relative measure of weapon strength.
"Speed" is how quickly the weapon can be fired. Slow weapons must be reloaded or charged up for a moment or two before being used again; fast weapons can be rapid fired.
"Secondary" indicates what happens when you use the weapon's Fire Secondary button.
"Notes" characterises the weapon.

A general discussion of each weapon follows each ratings list.

PULSE RIFLE

Power: Good
Speed: Good
Secondary: Grenades
Notes: Versatile, thanks to the built in grenade Launcher, frequent reloads necessary

The Pulse Rifle is your default weapon.

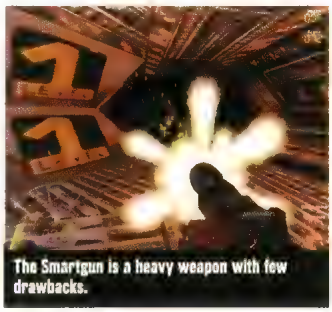
The Pulse Rifle is a solid weapon. Learn to use it well. Even given the array of advanced weaponry you'll pick up throughout the game, you'll find yourself coming back again and again to the Pulse Rifle. That's because many other weapons are too specialised to use all the time, and you won't have enough ammo to use them nonstop, anyway.

The Pulse Rifle fires rapidly and is accurate at long range. A second or two of gunfire is all it takes to shred an Alien; Predators are best dispatched with heavier weaponry, or with the Pulse Rifle's built-in grenade launcher.

If the Pulse Rifle has a downside, it's that it burns through each clip's 99 bullets quickly, prompting frequent reloads. It sounds like a lot, but 99 bullets disappear with alarming speed when you're engaged in intense combat with multiple enemies. The Pulse Rifle's grenades have a fairly small blast radius, so you must be accurate. When you do score a hit, however, you'll deal shattering damage.

SMARTGUN

Power: Very Good
Speed: Excellent
Secondary: Activates and deactivates tracking
Notes: A great weapon against most enemies; good power and infrequent reloads



The Smartgun is a heavy weapon with few drawbacks.

Think of the Smartgun as a somewhat more potent, faster firing Pulse Rifle without a grenade launcher. The lack of a grenade launcher detracts a little, but the increased rate of fire and main attack power more than compensate.

The Smartgun holds clips of 500 bullets, so you can fire for quite some time before running dry. This makes the Smartgun highly effective against crowds of enemies.

The Smartgun's fire secondary mode turns tracking on and off. When tracking is enabled, the Smartgun gradually homes in on targets. You still must aim the gun manually; it's slow to acquire a target if you aren't pointing in the right general direction. But it does fine-tune your shot, taking the guesswork out of long-range attacks and ensuring that your shots hit their marks.

Facehuggers, hard to hit with a Pulse Rifle, are easier to kill using the Smartgun's tracking. Powerful but slow enemies are also choice targets, but any enemy will suffer under its withering fire.

Aliens are so fast, the Smartgun's tracking must labour to keep up, especially when they leap or move laterally. When attacking Aliens, try turning off tracking with the fire secondary button and aiming manually, instead.

The Smartgun has no real flaws, especially if you remember to turn off tracking against particularly mobile foes. The only drawback is that it's not a hit and run weapon, so you must stay in the vicinity of your target until it's dead.

FLAME THROWER

Power: Good
Speed: Continuous stream
Secondary: -
Notes: Useful as a distraction in multi-player; great against Facehuggers in single player game

The Flamethrower is a potent but relatively specialised weapon. Each napalm canister provides you with 100 units of ammo, but because the Flamethrower fires in a continuous stream, it's hard to quantify that.

The Flamethrower sets your enemies on fire. This doesn't kill them instantly, however. Even Aliens can survive for a while after you've ignited them. Your enemies sustain continuous damage the entire time they're on fire, however.

In single-player, the fact that an Alien will continue attacking even after you set it on fire can be discouraging. Run away, however, and eventually it will die. Thus, the Flamethrower is a good hit-and-run weapon; set your enemies ablaze and then run, knowing that the enemy will probably die after a moment or two.

The Flamethrower is also great for wearing down tough enemies, and for roasting Facehuggers. The little Facehuggers don't die instantly when you roast them, but will after a second or two. They lose their ability to attack while they're aflame, so hitting them with the Flamethrower effectively negates them.

In multi-player games, the Flamethrower is a great distraction weapon. First, it forces the enemy to do something to stop the flames (For Aliens this means running around quickly, for Marines it

Setting enemies ablaze distracts them, especially in multi-player.

means picking up a Healthpack, and for Predators it means using the Medicomp.) The time your enemy spends dousing flames is time during which it probably won't attack. Furthermore, burning enemies have a greatly restricted view; they're on fire, after all, so they can't see what's going on very well.

The Flamethrower also makes a great getaway weapon. Use it as you run backward while an enemy chases you. The constant stream of napalm, plus its tendency to collect, flaming, on the ground, will make it hard for your pursuer to avoid the flames.

M83A2 SADAR

Power: Excellent
Speed: Slow
Secondary:
Notes: Incredibly powerful, but dangerous to the user if used in the wrong circumstances.

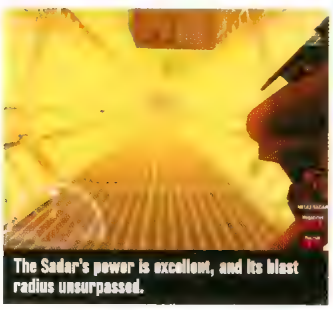
The Sadar grenade launcher is the Marine's most powerful single shot weapon and the single best way to eliminate certain enemies. But along with its immense power come substantial drawbacks.

The Sadar is a big weapon, and covers a good portion of your view while it's equipped. This isn't a terrible loss, but it does tend to weaken your situational awareness.

Worse, the Sadar is slow to fire. You can't run and gun with the Sadar; each grenade takes a moment to load.

Finally, and most significantly, the Sadar's grenades have a truly immense blast radius. If you use it at close range, or in close quarters, you'll just incinerate yourself.

In single-player episodes, the Sadar is best for taking out large groups of enemies, or lone powerful enemies, such as Xenoborgs and Predators. In multi player, the Sadar allows you to literally clear out whole rooms, often scoring multiple kills simultaneously.



The Sadar's power is excellent, and its blast radius unsurpassed.

GRENADE LAUNCHER

Power: Very Good
Speed: Average
Secondary: Switches between grenade types
Notes: A specialised weapon that's very effective if used correctly.

The Grenade Launcher fires three types of ordnance-Grenade, Frag, and Proximity Mine. Use the Fire Secondary button to toggle between these ordnance types.

Grenade rounds bounce around on surfaces for about three seconds before detonating - unless they hit something living, then they detonate immediately. They deal roughly the same damage as a Pulse Rifle grenade, but their blast radius is much larger.

Frag rounds also take a few moments to detonate, unless they hit a living target. They explode into dozens of tiny, damaging fragments that fly out from the blast at high speeds. Frag damage varies according to how many fragments hit the target. A direct hit, however, deals roughly the same damage as a direct hit with a standard Grenade.

Finally, Proximity Mines stick to the surfaces you fire them at and detonate after approximately 20 seconds. If a living creature gets close enough, however, it will beep and detonate.

The Grenade Launcher is especially useful in multi-player games. In single-player Marine episodes, you tend to fight more Aliens than anything else, and Aliens are too fast to hit consistently with Grenade or Frag rounds. You'll face so many Aliens, in fact, that even Proximity Mine traps can be insufficient.

In single-player, try to use the Grenade Launcher against large, tough enemies, such as Predators. In multi player, make the most of the Grenade Launcher's ability to set Proximity Mine traps and its ability to clear out rooms full of enemies.

There are three types of ordnance for the Grenade Launcher, all of it deadly.

MINIGUN

Power: Excellent
Speed: Excellent
Secondary: -
Notes: Nothing can withstand the Minigun.

The Minigun is arguably the Marine's best weapon. It deals damage at an incredible rate, taking out any enemy in a split second. Nothing can withstand its power.

The weapon's only liabilities are its limited ammo, and its kick, and the reduction and mobility the Marine must endure while using it - running and jumping are prohibited while firing the minigun. It holds a remarkable 800 bullets in every ammo belt, but a few seconds of constant firing will run you dry. Learn to fire the Minigun in pulses instead of holding down the trigger. The Minigun kicks upward as you continue firing, so you must adjust your aim downward to stay on target. This is a nuisance, but there's no way around it; once you get used to it you'll have no accuracy problems.

You'll seldom get your hands on the Minigun in single-player episodes, but when you do, you should save it for tough enemies - Predators, Predaliens, and the like. In multi-player games, however, you should use the Minigun whenever you've got it. It epitomises the Marine's weapon superiority, and it gives you a greater chance to kill enemies before they can close.

Use the Minigun against tough enemies, such as this Predalien.

POWERS

Marines have no innate special powers, but they do carry equipment that gives them permanent, useful abilities. For example, the Motion Detector is always available provided the Image Intensifier is not activated.

Marines also carry an unlimited supply of Flares to light up their surroundings. Only four Flares can be active at any one time, but there's no limit to the total number of Flares they can throw during the course of a game.

Certain bonus levels even give the Marine a Jetpack. This item allows them to fly to navigate otherwise impossible terrain.

VISION

Marines have two vision modes, Normal and Enhanced. Normal is the default mode; you can supplement it using Flares. Enhanced vision is available after you activate the Image Intensifier.

NORMAL VISION AND FLARES

Normal vision is standard for Marines. In this vision mode, things look... well, normal. Colours are as

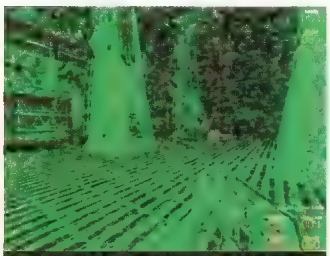
they should be, light areas look light, and dark areas look dark This vision mode is preferable to Enhanced vision whenever there's light

Employ Flares to illuminate dark areas. Flares tend to wash out colours and make everything look a
450 little strange, but they definitely improve visibility. It takes a while to learn where to throw Flares, though; tossing them into alcoves or behind walls can produce impenetrable shadows

ENHANCED VISION

Turn on the Image Intensifier to see the world in Enhanced vision mode
460 This vision mode is a lot like looking through night vision goggles· everything looks green and grainy This isn't an optimal vision mode for well-lit places, but it works well in total darkness

In less-than-total darkness, use Flares. In true darkness, forgo the light and just use the Image Intensifier



The Image Enhancer makes everything look green and grainy, but at least you can see.

470

EXPLORATION

The Marine can't crawl on walls as the Alien can, so his avenues of exploration are limited and usually obvious. There's less emphasis on crawling through dark, hard-to-find tunnels. Look for tunnels on walls and ceilings, though; Aliens are likely to appear from such places

480 EQUIPMENT GATHERING

Unlike Aliens, Marines need gear to survive. This is placed semi randomly throughout each level, some items always will be in a particular place, and other items may show up anywhere The key is to be aware of your surroundings,

Finding equipment caches like this one is key to the Marine's survival.

and seek to collect gear from every
490 room you explore

Occasionally, you must go out of your way to collect gear. You'll find few true dead ends or secret areas in *Aliens versus Predator,* however; much of your equipment gathering will happen during the course of beating the mission

MANIPULATING ITEMS

500 Where Aliens must break things instead of using them, Marines can and should use objects and features in their environment, including such common items as levers and valve wheels

If you find yourself stuck at a door that won't open, look around There's often a lever somewhere that'll do the trick

You must manipulate buttons and levers to get through most Marine episodes.

510

TACTICS

Relatively speaking, Marines are slow and not terribly durable - not a winning combination They do have one major advantage, though a wide range of potent weapons Using these weapons properly lies at the core of Marine tactics. But there are other things a Marine can
520 do to help himself

OVERVIEW

Marines are neither fast enough nor durable enough to escape bad positions quickly, so they must avoid such positions altogether The following tips will help keep you out of trouble when you play as a Marine

530

KEEP IT LIGHT

The Marine's Image Intensifier is a poor substitute for true night vision Stay in areas with at least a baseline amount of lighting you can then supplement with Flares. Avoid dark areas altogether, especially in multi player games, where you can pick and choose where to go.

540

MAINTAIN SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Because the Marine lacks a vision mode that highlights enemies, he must be especially diligent about maintaining situational awareness, keeping an eye on his Motion Detector, watching the world
550 around him, and spinning around often to view what's happening on all sides. When he enters a room, the Marine should be extra-careful to look for other outlets, including holes in walls and ceilings. Enemies (especially Aliens) can appear suddenly from such openings

Watch for holes in walls and ceilings, where Aliens might emerge.

STAY AT RANGE

Marines must strive to keep their
560 enemies at a distance, for a number of reasons

First, Marine weapons are accurate and potent from long range. The Pulse Rifle, Smartgun, and Minigun (kickback notwithstanding) don't lose much accuracy or power at long range, and the Sadar is the very definition of a long-range weapon. Compare
570 this to Alien weapons, which are close combat only, and Predator weapons, which, except for the Speargun, function best at short to midrange

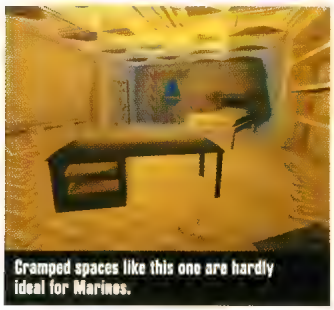
Factor in the Sadar and Grenade Launcher (and, to some extent, the Pulse Rifle's grenades), which must be fired at long range, and you've got a clear sense of why
580 Marines should fight from afar

Maintain separation from the target whenever possible! This is particularly necessary while fighting Aliens Get too close, and you're likely to catch a face full of corrosive blood

AVOID CRAMPED SPACES

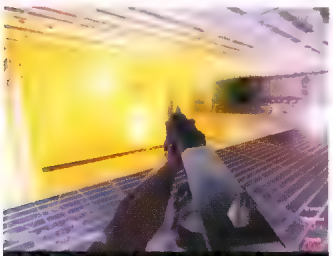
590 Just as Aliens mustn't get caught in the open, Marines should avoid getting

caught in small, cramped rooms. In a small room, many of the Marine's long-range weapons are either less effective or can harm the Marine, and Aliens in particular can use their entire arsenals, including their blood, at short range
600 If, despite your best intentions, you get stuck in a cramped area, consider using the Flamethrower. This creates a huge distraction, and hinders the enemy's ability to see you. And because it takes only a second for the flame to ignite an enemy, you can concentrate your full energy on fleeing


Cramped spaces like this one are hardly ideal for Marines.

610 SELECT APPROPRIATE WEAPONS

If you're looking down a steep drop-off, lob Grenades over the edge. At close quarters, use the Flamethrower. If you want to shred an enemy from long range, the Smartgun usually does the trick. Experiment with different weapons in different situations, and selecting the appropriate weapon will
620 become second nature


Lobbing Grenades down drop-offs and around corners can be a clever tactic.

COLLECT GEAR

Aliens and Predators both start with all the weapons they'll ever need. The Predator needs an occasional Field Charge to stay in fighting shape, but in terms of weapons, neither species has anything to worry about.

Marines, on the other hand,
630 must locate weapons to enjoy their benefits. When playing as a Marine, look for weapons and armour at every opportunity.

KEEP MOVING

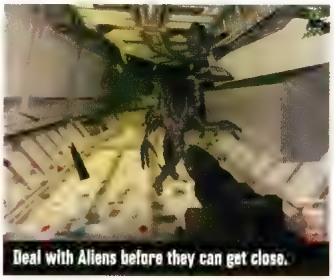
Marines, like Aliens, must keep moving. The only combatants who shouldn't are those who want to lose. Optimal combat
640 movement varies according to the enemy you face.

MARINES VS. ALIENS

The Marine's potent weaponry can
650 blast an Alien in milliseconds. The Alien can shred the Marine just as quickly, however, with its deadly claws and tail. Both species are relatively fragile, and both deal great damage; thus, confrontations between Aliens and Marines are usually brief.

To deal with an Alien effectively, remain aware and start
660 the fight before the Alien can close. If the Alien gets close, you're unlikely to survive. Keep moving, keep turning, and keep watching the Motion Detector.

Weapons with large explosive effects (the Grenade Launcher and Sadar come to mind) are great against Predators, but are harder to use consistently against Aliens.
670 Aliens can quickly close to a range where they're hard to track with such weapons, and where you'll injure yourself by firing them. Instead, use fast-firing weapons, such as the Smartgun or Minigun, to shred the Alien as it lunges at you.


Deal with Aliens before they can get close.

680 MARINES VS. PREDATORS

Predators are tough, but they're not as fast as Aliens. Thus, the heavier weapons in your arsenal, including the Grenade Launcher
690 and Sadar, are useful against them. If you must use a weaker weapon, such as the Pulse Rifle, empty bullets and grenades into the Predator simultaneously to maximise damage.

You needn't keep as far from Predators as you should from Aliens, but keeping your distance is still a good idea. In a combat
700 situation, the Predator's best long range weapon, the Speargun, is hard to aim at medium to long range. It's easier for it to hit you closer in, with its Pistol or Plasmacaster. Stay at medium range and exploit your weapons to their fullest.

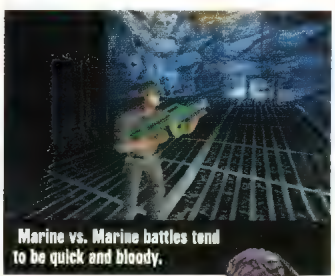
If the fight does get close, the Flamethrower is a useful tool for
720 distracting the Predator.

It takes heavy weapons and evasive action to take down a Predator.

MARINES VS. OTHER MARINES

730 Marine vs. Marine battles are brief affairs, due to the vast array of weapons available to both parties. Regardless of the range at which the fight takes place, it's sure to be quick and brutal.

Your Marine opponents have the same visual limitations as you, so hiding in the dark works well against them. Conversely, throwing
740 Flares only alerts them to your presence. PCG


Marine vs. Marine battles tend to be quick and bloody.

COMING NEXT

Next month, we'll be turning our attention to the Alien herself. Like the look of *AvP*? Check out our review in PCG 68, where Steve gave it 90%.

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The writing on the wall

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PLAYING GUIDE

CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER

The slightly oddball *Call To Power* has changed just enough to feel completely different to *Civ II*. Regain your winning form and relieve those frustrations with some bullet-proof advice.

By JAMES FLYNN

FOUL PLAY

GRAND THEFT AUTO: LONDON 1969

Love this game. I've always been fond of the summer of 1970. *(Croshi Stop that, you ponce. You're coming with me, you slag. You're Brown Bread son for making that mistake again. Let's get outta here and leave these cheat codes. – The Sweeney)*

6661970 – Infinite lives
pieandmash – Infinite lives and hit * key for all weapons
flashmotor – All levels
travelcard – All levels and infinite lives
iamfilth – Infinite lives
toothtoall – Infinite lives and hit * key for all weapons
iamgod – 10x multiplier
infinite lives press * for weapons
averyrichman – 999999999 points
uaintnuffin – 999999999 points, all weapons if you press * and all items
rommel – Debug Mode

At first, playing *Civilization: Call To Power* is deceptively similar to playing *Civilization II*. However, the first major step you should take is to forget that the two are related. Sure, there are constant reminders and some advances and techniques are vital in both games, but you mustn't constantly be saying, "This equates to that in *Civ II*." Apart from being a rather pointless exercise, you'll be far more successful if you use *Civ II* as a memory jogger and concentrate on fathoming out this far less intuitive game.

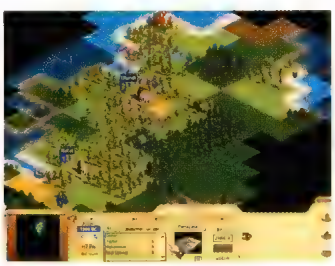
These tips tell you the ideal way to start your conquest and then provide some specific and general pointers about what to do next. I'll assume you're in there for a huge score and will relish some focussed military action. Remember, everyone plays differently so you're bound to disagree with a couple of things, but you can win on Emperor level playing like this. The grabs are from a typical game on Prince level showing the impact of this playing style.

1 YOUR FIRST CITIES

The start is everything. Correctly placing your first city is absolutely vita to success. You're looking for, in order of importance. a river, some forest, some grassland, a hill and natural resources The river will always provide food at the start of the game, the forest production and the grassland will be invaluable for growing your city later

The hills will be lovely for production when mines start to play a role. Natural resources *don't* boost production like in *Civ II* so they aren't as important for now On King or Emperor level, if you don't find a suitable place within three turns, regenerate your map or you'll be lagging behind

YOUR FIRST UNITS



Playing on the higher levels you have to take chances, and the start is by far the riskiest time. You need to get several cities up and running *quickly* to generate production and gold for science. It's a great idea to build a Settler as the first unit in your city until you can't fit any more in safely. The city will grow more slowly at the start, but you'll recoup the rewards tenfold later.

At this stage, treat every new settler as if it were your first, sending them off looking for another site (ideally downriver) inspect any ruins you encounter and build your next few cities quickly. Ideally the squares won't overlap but this isn't a priority now you can go looking for that perfect site later. You should probably build a Phalanx next although if you're feeling brave you can pop out a couple more settlers

THE BUILD QUEUE

This depends on which advances you've discovered, but assuming you've followed my advice and have been given the right choices, this is a good order for each city Phalanx (security), Granary (faster growth), Ramayana (just once!), Marketplace (cash), Academy (science), Slaver (fast exploration and population capture) Temple (happiness for later)

You don't want too many Slavers about and you want to

The resources screen is handy for reminding you how much you've got in each tile.

build as many wonders as you can early on in high production cities Chicken Itza and Confucius' Academy are also very useful. By turn 60 or so you should be looking at four or five cities and be starting to link them up with roads (generated from a trickle of 10%
70 public works from the outset)

MANAGING YOUR RESOURCES

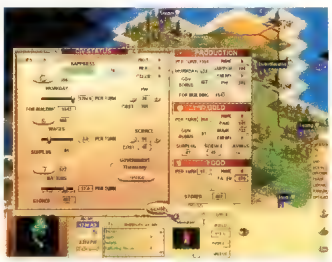
You've started quickly and now you need to consolidate. Delineate your surrounding area and you'll soon meet your first civ Research advances quickly and your cities grow the key to this is using your
80 population. You want as much production as possible, which still lets your cities grow every 20 turns or so. For now, gold will mostly come from improvements you build, and don't worry about happiness because you have the Ramayana. Science is easy at this stage. If you've built your city in the right place, this wont be a problem
90

INFRASTRUCTURE

Your public works should always be set at 10% toward the start of the game. Your first priority should be to connect your cities with roads and it can seem expensive Work back 'inwards' from your frontiers as this makes defence significantly easier, and don't forget
100 roads can start at both ends at once. Choose the fastest path, not the cheapest

Here, all my cities are defended, they're growing and they're being connected by roads I've put a farm down too, although it's arguably better to wait for the advanced farms later. You can set PW to 20% if you like, but don't
110 get carried away. Later on in the game make the most of Mega Mines and Automated Fisheries to maximise your resources.

GOVERNMENTS



Choosing the correct government is arguably the most important decision you can make throughout
120 the game. It not only affects the way you play with those rations, workday and wages sliders but governs everything from happiness to science. Switching at the right time it vital and there is a (far too) simple and easy progression in my opinion

Get Theocracy as soon as you can (in this game i changed by 1800BC) and build the Ramayana
130 Up your workday to 12 hours and leave the other two sliders alone. This combination will be profitable for centuries even with large cities, especially if you build the Hagia Sophia and cathedrals to cheer people up. Theocracy also provides clerics who can be useful for generating gold

The next step should be
140 Democracy and not Republic. Switch as soon as you can for a scientific boost but try not to be in the middle of a huge war because Theocracy is slightly more effective for fighting. Democracy is hugely different to *Civ II's* government of the same name and will probably take you through your most troubled period (see 'Wade on in'
150 on page 153). Therefore, don't worry if your gold is looking shaky – the important thing is to reach milestone advances.

Your next goal is the Corporate Republic, which is a superb government in every way. There are more important advances to get between the two (such as tank warfare) but make the
160 economic path a priority at first because you absolutely must build the over-powerful London Exchange (no upkeep costs whatsoever) which comes with Economics. Finally, for a population and scientific boost at the end of the game you may want to change to Virtual Democracy, but don't ever fight under this.
170

ADVANCES

Science is the *éminence grise* of *Call To Power* You will live or die by your discoveries so make sure you research the correct advances in the right order. In the first two ages (Ancient and Renaissance) there are about 40 advances, but whichever way you play the game
180 10 are absolutely vital to your

FOUL PLAY

RIVAL REALMS

A flawed classic. Actually that's a bit of an overstatement: a flawed not-bad thing. VIRUS, of course, just dumps this interesting mix of RTS hang-questing and police-and-stick tactical FPS fantasy mayhem with fuck-prime. Let's just give the fun bits get the hell out of here.

Press ENTER, tap in the cheat then slam ENTER again.

SEE ALL – See whole map
HIDE ALL – Turn back to explored map
GIVE ME GOLD – 1,000 gold
GIVE ME WOOD – 500 wood
GIVE ME FOOD – 500 food
MAKE ME INVINCIBLE – Invincible units
MAKE ME VULNERABLE – Restore vulnerability
LEVEL xxx – Skip to mission xxx
STAR ME UP – Increase experience for selected units
UPGRADE ME – Upgrade selected units
HEAL ME – Full health for selected units
MAKE ME VICTORIOUS – Win mission
NAME xxx – Changes selected unit's name to xxx

ADVANCE	WHY?
Bronze Working	Phalanx for good defence (you should get it automatically)
Religion	Gives Ramayana for happiness
Theocracy	Gives powerful government of same name
Writing	Opens up two huge advance paths
Jurisprudence	Chicken Itza eliminates crime
Philosophy	Academy boosts science
Trade	Caravans increase gold
Classical Education	Vital to success
Agricultural Revolution	Build advanced farms for faster growth
Printing Press	Major science breakthroughs

FOUL PLAY

KINGPIN (DEMO)

You looking at me? You. Yeah you. You looking at me. Yeh? I'm gonna kill you, mother. I'm gonna take y' an nail spikes through your head and I'm gonna killyajsghfjkagwksjfbvkjswbv lksblfebked. OK?

Here are some cheats:

Start the game with '+set developer 1' added to the command line, then use ` to bring down the console. Type in the phrases below to load up on cheats.

GOD – God mode on/off
NOCLIP – No clipping mode on/off
MAP (name) – Maps in demo are: bar_sr, bike, pawn_sr, sewer, sr1, sr2, and sr3
GIVE ALL – Gives everything except cash
BULLETS xxx – Give xxx bullets
SHELLS xxx – Give xxx shells
GAS xxx – Give xxx gas
CROWBAR – Give crowbar
PISTOL – Give pistol
SHOTGUN – Give shotgun
FLAMETHROWER – Give flamethrower
CASH xxx – Give xxx cash
KEY1-10 – Give Key 1-10
COIL – Give coil
WATCH – Give watch
BATTERY – Give battery

BRIAN LARA CRICKET

It's just not cricket. Except, of course, it is.

Just enter these passwords on the Classic Match screen and reap in the It's-a-Six! bonuses.

CMBRLARA – Ultimate batsmen
NONOTOUT – Indestructible wickets
TIMEWARP – Quick match
MEDICINE – Grotesquely large cricket ball

⇨ success. Leave the others until you have no choice and aim for them in the order set out on the previous page – remember, the aim is to build a solid civilization which can afford to go to war. Also remember that the research tree is infinitely more powerful if certain branches grow faster at
190 certain times

Ramayana is the first wonder you should gain.

You'll notice none of the advances we've listed are focussed on the military units. Yet. For now, it's time to hit them hard.
Gunpowder Musketeers
Cannon Making – Erm, makes cannons

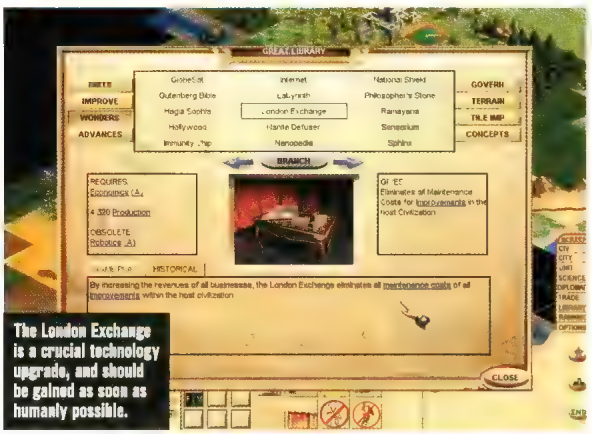
Upgrade all key city defences to
200 musketeers (just to be safe) and construct two armies' worth of cannons and musketeers. Now research towards
Agricultura Revolution – Advanced Farms and new path
Mechanical Clock – Needed for Age of Reason
Age Of Reason – Beware the Wonders it obsoletes
210 Economics – Build the London Exchange
Mass Production – Gives Tank
Explosives – Gives Artillery

And from there on in you should be able to cope

WONDERS

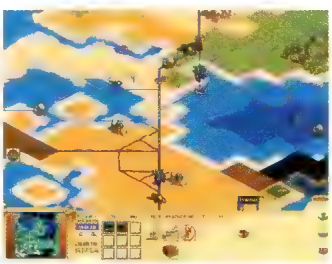
The Wonders of the world are
220 slightly less satisfying to build then in *Civ II* because of their relative obscurity. They are also much faster to construct at the start of the game so make one or two high production cities concentrate on them. Most of the early ones are useful but Ramayana is essential. Happiness isn't as much of a problem in *CTP* as *Civ II* (apart from
230 on Emperor level) so try to concentrate on building the scientific and production ones

After the early stages where you'll build anything because it's cheap, you should do your utmost to build the Gutenberg Bible, Edison's Lab, Contraception, and most of all the London Exchange. There are annoyingly few wonders
240 in the middle game and by the time you reach the end you should be winning anyway. However, concentrate on the Sensorium, National Shield (if you're at war), Gaia Controller and The Eden Project



The London Exchange is a crucial technology upgrade, and should be gained as soon as humanly possible.

TRADE



The mysterious beast that is trade
250 adds nothing to the game apart from free and easy gold. Build caravans in batches from one high production city, particularly when you are capturing other cities and opening up new possibilities. Caravans don't rot so you can cash them in later. Always use your advisor's advice (he always identifies the most profitable,
260 available routes) and check every five turns or so. Don't bother with anything under 20 gold

There is also a strong argument for sticking to sending goods within your own empire unless you're going for a friendly victory as it reduces pirating. Pirating yourself is pretty pointless as the rewards are so low. Basically,
270 use it but don't get excited over it

DIPLOMACY

This is a strange concept in *Call To Power*. The computer AI is relatively sensible (if somewhat random) in its behaviour. You don't have to establish an embassy to send emissaries. If you're stronger than them (see above screenshot) your
280 priority should be demanding their maps as it saves you the exploration and risks. Feel free to ask away. If you're weaker than them, become stronger

I still don't think there's any particularly satisfying or effective way of winning without some combat, so treat diplomacy as a last resort if you have been caught on the back
290 foot. In that case, suggest a peace treaty (which lasts for ten turns) build up some forces and teach them a lesson. The only other use is to tell them to stop trespassing

POLLUTION

Pollution is just one of those things. You're heavily penalised for it score wise at a certain stage, but as long
300 as you win after that its negative effects will have diminished. Production is more important than pollution, so until you discover Fuel

While giant purple crabs threatened Thembu, Jim put his feet up in Ulundi and laughed.

Cells (Eco transit) and Fusion (Fusion Plant) just accept it. Terraform your damaged scenery back into shape and build the reducing items when they come along. Get rid of as much as possible before you win, though

(Left) Keep an eye on your ranking to judge how well you're doing.

WADE ON IN

Combat is by far the single most reformed area in *Call To Power*. For the first time in a *Civ* game, units can attack and defend as groups. This is welcome and more realistic but also radically changes your tactics. In *Civ II* discovering the catapult quickly enabled you to wage war almost immediately with a small, concentrated force. It was the attacking unit of choice until the cannon (and even the tank) arrived thousands of years later.

There is no catapult in *Civ: CTP* and no comparable unit. Attacking with 3 Samurai, 3 Archers and 3 Phalanxes can be effective but it is ludicrously expensive in production and upkeep costs, not to mention the inevitable casualties due to the high defensive bonuses. Therefore, and some will disagree, it is highly preferable not to attack until you have musketeers and cannons.

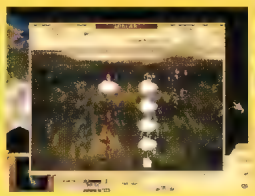
The best combination in an army is a good mix of attacking and defensive units. Ranged units have a huge advantage too, but only when supported properly. The very first combat units you should build ought to be the slaver and cleric and you'll probably pick a few Archers and Samurai up by exploring ruins early on. Sit back, explore, expand your civilization and make *five cannons and four musketeers* the blueprint for your first armies.

Attack as soon as you have the necessary units. Because armies are supported by the entire civilization you can build them from just two or three cities, which makes life infinitely easier than in *Civ II*. Once you have located the enemy, immediately start constructing a road towards them to speed up your war effort (this is very important, especially if there are mountains in the way). Build it right up to his doorstep as fast as you can.

As long as you can defend it, it's often a good idea to build a token city halfway along the route to speed up the process and give you a staging point. The computer seems fairly random in the number of units it stores in each city. Attack the first cities you come to but concentrate on the medium and larger ones but beware the capitol as it's usually well-defended. Feel free to bombard for one turn to be safe, then attack with an entire army, finish the job off and leave any heavily damaged units to repair and defend the captured city. Move on quickly. Finish them off quickly to keep your people happy.

Your second armies should be Tank-based, preferably with support from War Walkers (gained through Robotics). Ideally have five Tanks and four War Walkers and, ideally, bombard cities from the sea or air before-hand with battleships and bombers. If the enemy is really stubborn and advanced, you might have to build Star Cruisers, Storm Marines and Nukes but the game isn't that hard and you don't want to be fighting when they have these units available.

If you have the right units in the right numbers, combat is relatively simple. The key is getting your civilization to the stage where it can build *and* move the units around quickly.



It's hardly *Braveheart*, but what do you expect from a *Civilization* game? 3D-accelerated visuals, bump-mapping and texture compression!

FOUL PLAY

ARMY MEN 2

A sad case. All those years we spent pushing little plastic men around our bedroom floors have been horribly tarnished by association with this fourth-rate RTS. We cry. Then we cheat. Just because we can, like.

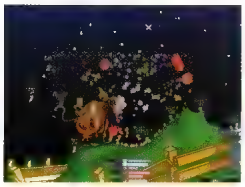
Enter message mode by pressing \, then type '!when all else fails...' to free the cheats.

!patton's speach – Inspire troops
!i give up – Level restart
!veni vidi vinci – Level skip
!night of the walking dead – Resurrect enemy as zombies
!suicide kings – Sarge autodeath
!ninja arts – Faster, stealthier sarge
!god of gamblers – Random item
!paper dolls – Parachuters
!watchtower in the sky – Recon
!geronimo! – 12 air strikes
!beautiful nikita – Infi... sniper rifle
!fourth of july – M80
!roach spray – Infinite Can-o-fire
!ruby ray – Infinite magnifying glass
!aluminum foil – Flak jacket
!smorfs – Blue uniform
!metal sheeting – Grey uniform
!shrink wrap – Tan uniform
!pooper scooper – Mine sweeper
!gr... Explosives
!acme discs – Land ...
!no rocket launcher – Infinite rocket launcher
!village people – Infinite flamethrower
!i have a rock – Infinite handgranads
!phoenix! – Flame man
!surprise party – Spawn lots of enemies
!armageddon – Kill everything on map
!doctor doctor – Full Health
!spidey senses tingling – Reveal all enemies
!jumpjets – Teleports Sarge
!santini – Invincible

Q&A

Take note, gamers of distinction! A new platform for your skills – and another chance to win stuff...

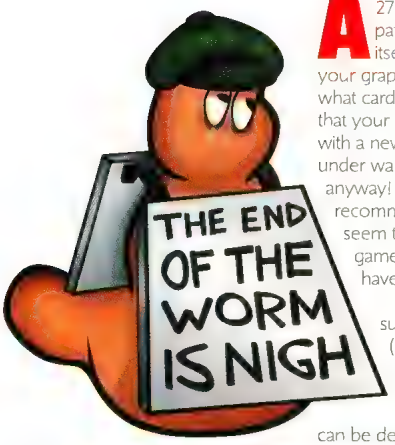
By ROSS ATHERTON



WORMS ARMAGEDDON

Q My sons are having trouble with the training level on *Worms Armageddon*. Having tried the grenade throwing, before the next round starts the screen goes blank and the PC locks up. The rest of the game seems to work, but I'm worried about doing damage. Also, your demos are leaving footprints – short-cuts and headings and so on – all over the place. Is there a simple way to get rid of these?

Gary Deakin, Cheshire



A Team 17's support line is 01924 271637. It doesn't sound like a patch problem within the game itself, but a minor problem with your graphics card. You don't mention what cards you have, but you may find that your PC supplier will be able to help with a new driver, especially if it's still under warranty. Keep pestering them anyway! If you can't get anywhere, I recommend you ignore it – it doesn't seem to be affecting your other games or programs, and it won't have done any damage.

As for our demos: make sure you uninstall them properly (go through Control Panel) rather than just deleting them. This may still leave Start menu footprints, but these can be deleted through Settings/Taskbar Properties. When a demo is installing, you will usually be prompted to confirm where it will be installed: if you create a 'Demos' folder, you can ghettoise them all there.

The wibbly, wobbly world of *LBA 2*.

LBA 2

Q For a *long* time I have been stuck on *LBA 2*. I am at the part where I have to find the fragment on the island of the Francos. I have the burgomaster's notes, but I can't decipher the riddle. Please help!

Clara Wood, Cambridgeshire

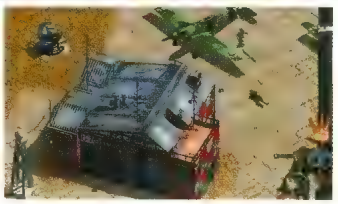
A Go into the bazaar and face the centre of it, with your back to the palm tree (the 'natural parasol'). Running, move forward a number of strides equal to the number of lamps, posts and arches added together. On the right is a dip almost at gas level: that's the spot referred to in the notes. Using the pickaxe you bought in the bazaar, dig in that spot and you should find what you seek.

COMMANDOS: BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

Q I'm stuck on *Commandos Beyond The Call Of Duty*, on only the first level. I can't work out how to get safely onto dry land without being shot by the machine gun post. Please help, or this is the most frustrating I'll ever see of the game.

Jack Fenwick, Isle of Wight

A That would be a tragedy indeed, Jack. Fortunately, I've got some nice level codes so you can get stuck on each of the game's eight levels. If anyone fancies penning a walkthrough for Jack, or showing off a cunning tactic, cast your eyes across the page. For now, though, those codes, to enter at the load-game screen:



Dying Light – (none)
The Asphalt Jungle – H239Z
Dropped Out Of The Sky – IR291
Thor's Hammer – NGYA7
Guess Who's Coming Tonight – 6S5TL
Eagle's Nest – VND2R
The Great Escape – BUK2L
Dangerous Friendships – LL42X

BROKEN SWORD

Q I am stuck on *Broken Sword*. I've got into the castle, but I can't get past that damn goat. Every time I stand up the goat knocks me over. Even if I click on the plough thing to try and shut the goat in, I can never reach it in time.

Scott Vance, Newcastle

A CD ROM editor Trevor's multi player name is Goat Boy for this very reason – the idea being that he always knocks us over in *Quake II* and *Team Fortress*. The Goat is past his prime, sadly, and uses a Zimmer frame for rocket-jumping these days.

You're on the right track with *Broken Sword*; you have to approach from the right place, though. Click on the ladder first, then, when you're knocked over, immediately click on the ploughshare on the far left. It's a matter of timing, like so many things in life.

OVER TO YOU...

As summer finally appears in Bath, I'm just nipping out to bask in the sunshine like a great big lizard. While I'm away, do you mind filling up this big blue box with questions and answers? This month's most helpful contributor is Michael Dawson, who receives a bootiful Pace 3D Edge graphics accelerator for his *Shadows Of The Empire* knowledge.

A I am writing to offer cheats to Tom Anderson, who requested assistance with ***Shadows Of The Empire*** in issue 69. Start a new game, and enter the name R Testers ROCK making sure you include the spaces and capitals. You'll then have access to all levels, and you'll also be able to use the following cheats: first, on foot, hold the camera key for five seconds for access to the full map. Secondly, at the Skyhook, do the same procedure in order to fly the X-Wing or TIE fighter. And lastly, while on foot, crouch for 15 seconds to magically get access to all guns, ammo and a super shield for 20 seconds.

Michael Dawson, London

A In answer to James Golynski's problems with ***Carmageddon 2*** in issue 69, I can direct him to the missing zombie. In the top right-hand corner of the map is a smaller hillock upon which wanders the remaining zombie. They also appear as tiny yellow dots on the map.

Jonathan Taylor, Bromley

READERS' TOP TIPS

In an unprecedented move, this page will henceforth become a forum for you. We're looking for clever moves, secrets, Easter Eggs and amusing or convenient bugs rather than game hacks, as long as they're brief enough to fit in. The author of the best one each month will receive a random goody plucked from the office. Nick Bethune, for his *Carmageddon 2* knowledge, for instance, receives a Thrustmaster NASCAR Super Sport steering wheel. Write to: Readers' Tips, PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW – or e-mail: QandA@futurenet.co.uk

CARMAGEDDON 2

1. If you want loads of time, open the settings.txt file in the *Carmageddon 2* folder. Find the line resembling "//time score per ped" and change the number there to any number you like. That is the seconds you'll get for each pedestrian, so 1,000 equals about 17 minutes

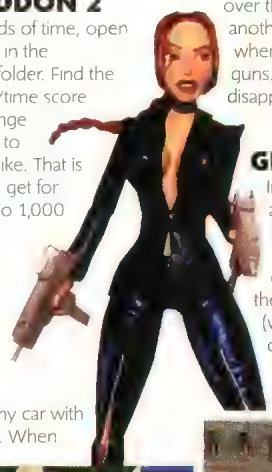
2. For more cash, do the same but change the line which says "//points score per ped"

3. Target the enemy car with the most damage. When he dies, you'll get the points, even if you don't cause it

4. If you're struggling for control underwater, try driving backwards. Wheel-spinning will also give you a bit more control

5. If you're making a big jump or drop, hit the handbrake and turn to put the car in a flat spin. This will make sure you hit the ground wheels first

Nick Bethune, West Sussex



TOMB RAIDER 2

At Lara's mansion, go to the flying fox platform. Jump up from the right side of the platform, at an angle, to land on the ledge. Using this ledge, you can go over the maze and jump onto another wall. Climb up onto the roof, where you will find a selection of guns. Unfortunately, the butler has disappeared

Steve Kenier, Glasgow

GRAND THEFT AUTO

In reply to much controversy about the helicopter in *GTA*, here is my guaranteed solution. In the *GTA* folder, open the fxt2.txt file and find the line which reads [Car87]xxxx (where xxxx is the name of a car). Write a *new* line beneath it which reads [Car88]Helicopter, and then open the mission.in' file. Change the starting vehicle number to 88, and when you start a new game, you should have a helicopter

J Lavington, Wiltshire

SPEC OPS

During a mission, press Alt-Shift-V and select 'viewmaster'. The screen will flash blue to confirm it, the timer will reset to 9:59, and you'll be invincible

I Philipson, Barrow-in-Furness

GANGSTERS

I never bother with patrolling, as my men only get picked up. Starting in the middle of a map is crucial to early success, as you should immediately have three people on extortion duty in a Speedster. Set up another extortion squad in a coupe, and on week two get some men collecting protection money. As soon as you have around eight hoods with good gunnery skills, send them over to the enemy HQ on a kill order to take out the boss

Sami Brett, Bristol

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Most publishers offer their own games support service, so if you're stuck on one of their titles, try phoning them directly.

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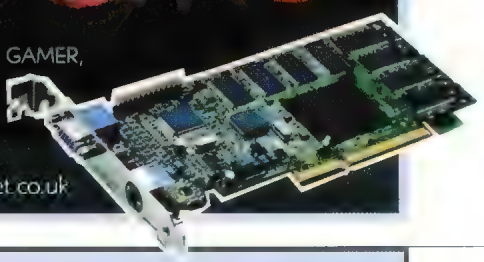

A Issue 64 saw Philip Hurst asking for help in ***Lula: The Sexy Empire***. During the second stage in Las Vegas, make a video of four or five pictures in length, and go to the distributor. Click on the videos on the desk, but reject the offer and ask for more. Keep doing this until you're happy.

Thomas Richardson, Nottingham

Q I'm stuck on a game called ***Lighthouse: The Dark Being***. I can't open the safe, although I have a combination for it (5R, 18L, 28R). I also can't open the door in the hallway; I have a code for it too (8-24-96) but it doesn't seem to work. Please help!

Tracey Smith, Isle of Wight

Q I'm a big fan of ***Warzone 2100***, but I'm the kind of strategist who likes to take my time. I just don't like having to battle against the clock as well as the enemy! Does anyone know how to disable the time limit, or increase the time available on each mission?

Sam Mordon, Reading

Q Aargh! I am horrified to find that the ***Grand Theft Auto*** cheats do not work with the groovy London mission pack! I am only on the second mission but I'm bored already – I just want to have fun. Please help me in my quest to become Pearly King of London's streets.

Chris Kennett, Kent

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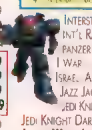

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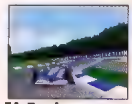
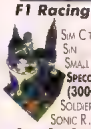


F1 Racing

Warzone 2100



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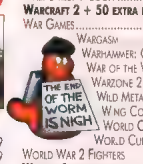

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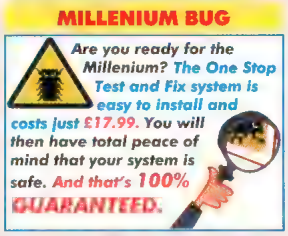

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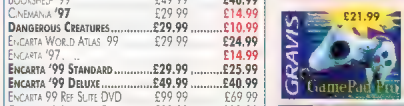

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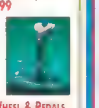

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PC GAMER

Upgrading on a limited budget? We show you which parts to swap out first and which will give the biggest gaming benefits.

SYSTEMS

BEARDY BIT

Everyone wants a faster, better, bigger PC. And why not? Upgrading needn't be a painful experience, and it's often much easier than you think. This month, I'll run through the most effective upgrades you can make right across the board, from graphics cards to motherboards.

Aha, I hear you cry. Isn't this upgrading business dashed expensive? Fear not, because I'll also show you where your money will be best spent. So don't get left behind – upgrade or die!

SIMON WILLIAMS

IN an ideal world, we would all be able to add all the bits we want to our PCs and run the latest games without problem. Dammit, if the world were ideal, we would all be able to afford new PCs every year – and there would be peace and love throughout the earth, badgers would be effectively protected and there'd be free Winner Tacos for all.

But life isn't like that. Funds are limited and you have to balance £100 for a new graphics card against £100 for beer for a month – tricky choice. So what you need is guidance on what can make the most difference and provides the greatest benefit. So here's the run down, in order of large well-formed explosions per buck. I'll also look at the difficulty of installing and getting each modification up and running. Even if it costs very little and will make a tremendous difference, if the set-up is daunting and you have little experience on the inside of your PC, you could be better making an upgrade which, on the face of it, seems to be less cost-effective.

With nothing more technical than a cross head screwdriver, you can magically transform a wee timorous vole of a PC into a right squeaky little games playing ferret (do you like the continuing theme of small British carnivores in these similes?). Anyway, here's how

GRAPHICS ADAPTOR/ ACCELERATOR

If you have a reasonably fast processor, say a 166MHz or above, your games will benefit most from a graphics accelerator. The faster the processor, the more benefit you'll see, though this is just for games. If you have an AGP graphics slot in your PC – if you bought it new within the last 18 months or so – you should think about buying a new graphics card. Key choices here are an nVIDIA Riva TNT 2, 3Dfx Voodoo3, ATi Rage 128 or S3 Savage 4. It will cost you between £150 and £200 to buy one of these cards, depending on which model you choose.

If you don't have a graphic adaptor in an AGP slot, but only PCI slots in your PC, look at adding a 3D accelerator, either a Voodoo2 card or a Videologic Apocalypse 3D in another PCI slot. The Voodoo card will support more games.

It's neater to have one graphics card which provides 2D graphics and 3D acceleration, but if you have no AGP slot, you'll have to go for a separate accelerator.

Installation of either type of card is pretty straightforward. First, undo the retaining screw at the back and remove the old card. Fit the new card in its place. With a PCI accelerator, you'll also need to connect the supplied cable from the back of your graphics card to the accelerator card.

Fire up your PC and install the drivers supplied with it. If you have problems, try the Internet for a later version and in the case of an accelerator, check for new graphic card drivers, too.

Games Benefit 90% *Ultimate Choice*
Cost 83%
Ease of Installation 85%

PROCESSOR/ SYSTEM BOARD

The big snag with a processor upgrade is the probability that your system board will need upgrading at the same time. Although a processor upgrade provides a performance boost to games and to every other program on your PC, if you have to replace the system board – the main board inside your PC into which everything else plugs – you won't find it trivial. You'll have to take all the cards out, take out the memory and disconnect all the cables. You then have to unscrew the system board and carefully remove it.

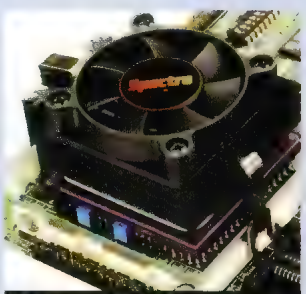
Replacing it with a new system board involves the whole procedure in reverse and the fun has only just started. Windows will have to go through

DOWN BELOW Hot new widgets to stick under the bonnet of your PC.

New life for old PCs

When I said that upgrading your processor would often involve upgrading your system board as well, I wasn't counting the Spectra 333. This new upgrade processor from Evergreen, a company which specialises in this kind of plug-and-go solution, uses an AMD K6-2 processor running at 333MHz and a small sub-board under the processor to match settings to older Pentium systems.

If you have a Pentium 75 or faster processor, you should be able to use this upgrade to dramatically increase the speed of your machine (the faster your existing processor, the less dramatic the effect). You should see roughly a threefold increase in speed over a Pentium 75.



Evergreen can provide a simple plug-and-play upgrade for tired PCs, as long as your system's BIOS can make the grade.

The upgrade comes with a floppy disk and a CD. You use the floppy disk to load a diagnostic program which displays your PC's existing configuration. It also tells you if there's a suitable BIOS upgrade available for your machine on the CD. If so, it blows the new BIOS for you.

You will probably have to set the bus speed and supply voltage with jumpers on your system board, but other than that, it's really just a question of unplugging the old processor – with its heatsink and fan – and plugging in the Spectra.

For the Spectra 333's typical price of £199, you could buy a system board and 333MHz processor, but that's not really the point. The upgrade is intended for those who don't want to do this kind of work. For that market, this product is ideal.

K6-III 400

■ Supplier **Mesh Computers** ■ Contact **0181 208 4701** ■ Price **£999** ■ Processor **400MHz AMD K6-III** ■ Secondary cache **256K (plus 512K tertiary)** ■ Memory **64Mb (768Mb max)** ■ Hard drive **7.85Gb, Western Digital** ■ CD-ROM **x40** ■ Graphics card **16Mb 3Dfx Voodoo3 2000** ■ Monitor **17-inch Philips 107S** ■ Other bits **Floppy, 56K modem, SoundBlaster 64 sound card, Yamaha speakers** ■ Bundled software **Windows 98, SmartSuite Millennium, ViaVoice**

AMD'S K6-III 400 processor is claimed by AMD to be faster than a Pentium III 450. This machine, built by Mesh and given the same name as its processor, is certainly quick. The tower case holds a similar component mix to many in this price range, but as a key incentive, couples the K6-III to a 16Mb Voodoo3.

There's a 40 speed CD-ROM drive at the top of the drive stack and a standard floppy drive below this, but it's inside that most of the interesting stuff goes on. The K6-III processor is backed by 64Mb of memory, enough for anything you're likely to play this year and easily upgradable to a maximum of 768Mb. There's also a 7.85Gb hard drive for permanent storage.

The key feature of the K6 III is that, like the Celeron, it has secondary cache memory on the same die as the processor, and it's running at the full 400 megahertz Unlike the Celeron, though, it has 256K as standard and can use additional third level, or tertiary cache. Here it has 512K of tertiary cache on the system board.

There's a SoundBlaster 64 sound card in one of the PCI slots, running to a pair of Yamaha speakers, and a 56K modem for good measure. The graphics come from a 3Dfx Voodoo3 card Although it's the lowest spec card in the range, the higher ones are still only just appearing, and it gave a very good account of itself on all the 3D games I tried. Benchmark results were also well above average and all the visuals were well handled by a 17-inch Philips monitor which gave a clear picture.

Keyboard and mouse are above average and the software bundle, although having no games, will stand you in good stead for any serious work you do. At £999, this is a well specced machine, which will get the most out of your games software and pretty much anything else you want to throw at it.

A good machine with a pretty exciting processor, the enticingly-named K6-III 400 in an interesting way to spend a grand.

PC GAMER

High speed and high quality components at a nice price.

83%

Towing the Linux

Linux, the upstart alternative operating system which Microsoft have recently quoted as being a major competitor, really does look as if it could be gaining general acceptance in important quarters. The system, which is essentially free for download off the Internet (try *www.redhat.com*), is programmed by anybody who wants to lend a hand and, far from being a mish-mash of incoherent ideas, is a stable and fast version of the big-company standby, Unix.

Linux may become a real, practical alternative to Windows, and you can try it now by installing it as a secondary operating system on your hard drive.

It supports multiple processing and has several of its own graphical user interfaces. It's now being supported by HP, IBM and Corel among other big players. So where are the games? There are already versions of *Quake* and *Final Battle* available for Linux and the extra interest should mean more before too long. Find out more from *www.linuxhq.com*.

Gold games

Do you buy games over the Internet? If not, you might like to consider doing so with Gold, a new on-line games club which offers three PC games for £24, as long as you agree to buy a further three games in the following 12 months. If you agree

GOLD 1st
Games On-Line Direct

While we wish Gold every success, less than half of those polled showed an interest - which isn't a great deal.

If it's a simple flick-out, pop-in upgrade, a processor is easy to change. If you have to change the system board, though, it becomes a major task.

and recognise all the new electronics on the replaced system board – it's almost like reinstalling it from scratch.

On the plus side, if you go for a new system board, you can move from Pentium to K6 III or from MII to Celeron – just about any processor you fancy becomes available to you. If you find you can fit a faster processor to your existing board (top-speed is usually a limitation) you have to stick to the same type of processor. Socket 7 for AMD and Cyrix, Slot 1 (or Socket 370 for new Celerons) for Intel.

Games Benefit 75%
Cost 63%
Ease of Installation 47%

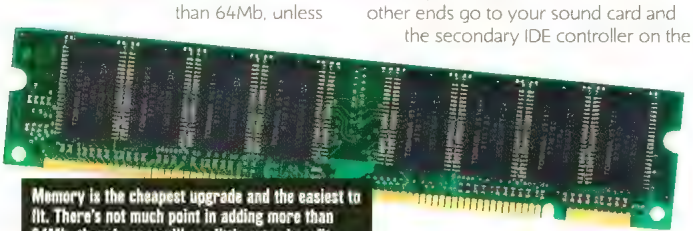
MEMORY/HARD DRIVE

The memory in your PC is only relevant as an upgrade if you don't have enough. Once you have enough to run your programs smoothly, there's little benefit in adding more. A modern Windows 98 system doesn't normally need more than 64Mb, unless you spend time designing full colour brochures with PhotoShop or editing your home videos.

Memory is cheap, around a pound a megabyte and dead easy to fit, as long as you have a memory socket free. The only thing to watch is the type of memory socket. Most PCs now use DIMMs, which means you can just pop an extra module in and everything should work. If you have older, SIMM memory, you have to buy upgrades in pairs of modules – two 8Mb modules for 16Mb, two 16Mbs for 32Mb and so on.

These days, complex games have increasingly large hard drive installs, so having a lot of hard drive space is a 'good thing'. Fit as high a capacity hard drive as you can afford and link it in on the same cable as your existing drive. Set the jumpers on the back of the drives to Master on the existing device and Slave on the new one.

Games Benefit 70% ***Best Budget Buy***
Cost 95%
Ease of Installation 90%



Memory is the cheapest upgrade and the easiest to fit. There's not much point in adding more than 64Mb, though, as you'll see little extra benefit.

CD-ROM/DVD DRIVE

Name me three games not published on CD in the last year that anybody would want to play? A CD ROM drive is essential for loading and playing just about any new game. If your PC doesn't have one, buy a 24-speed device for around £40 – fitting it is easy. Don't be fooled by 30- or 40-speed drives; there's little real speed advantage and the slower drive may work more reliably.

You have to remove one of the blanking panels in front of a drive bay in your PC, slide the CD-ROM drive in and connect the power lead, sound lead (a thin round cable with two miniature plugs) and control cable. The last two are supplied with the drive and their other ends go to your sound card and the secondary IDE controller on the system board. Don't connect the CD ROM to the same controller as your hard drive, as it may slow the hard drive down considerably.

If you have no CD-ROM drive, fit one. If you have a CD-ROM drive, consider fitting a DVD instead.

If you already have a CD-ROM drive, should you upgrade to DVD? As well as being able to play DVD movies (expensive at the moment, but much higher quality than VHS videos), you will start to see big games being introduced on DVD. It's cheaper than lots of CDs (witness *Final Fantasy VII*) and you won't have to swap discs as you progress through the game.

Games Benefit 90%
Cost 78%
Ease of Installation 70%

SOUND SYSTEM

A good sound card and a new set of speakers can radically improve your gaming.

There are plenty of PCs with lamentable sound systems. Sound cards which have progressed little since Creative first came up with the name SoundBlaster. There are several sound chips available from a number of sound card suppliers which will make a dramatic improvement to your PC's sound system – Yamaha's XG synth chip, Aureal's sound processor with

DOWN BELOW

to buy six, you can get the starter offer for just £15.

As part of the press release put out by Gold, which stands for Games On-Line Direct, research is quoted which shows that 47% of those who responded to Gold's questionnaire were interested in buying games over the Internet.

Supermarket Sweep

Fujitsu, the giant Japanese computer makers, made a name for themselves last year as the supplier of high value, low cost PCs through several branches of Tesco. Now Sainsbury's, wanting to get in on the same act, have decided to sell PCs, too. And the brand it's gone for is Fujitsu.

The company is supplying a Pentium III 450 machine with a 15-inch monitor, 8.5Gb hard drive, 40-speed CD-ROM and an 8Mb graphics card for £999. At the moment, it's available from 24 Sainsbury's stores and 13 Savacentres, but expect more to follow. You can find out more information by visiting any store.

A tasty addition to anyone's grocery list, the Fujitsu PIII 450 is a snip at £999.

effective 3D from two speakers and Creative's own Environmental audio, as seen in its SoundBlaster Live!. Cards using these three systems cost from £30 to £100

The sound card is only half the equation, though. The speakers can have at least as much effect. Although Creative PC Works four or five speaker packs are good value at around £100, look at Boston Acoustics, Altec Lansing, Videologic's Sirocco and Creative's other Cambridge Soundworks offerings for higher quality speaker sets

Sound card installation is no more difficult than fitting a graphics adaptor, but cabling the speakers, particularly if there are six of them, can take a while. The latest PCI sound cards also require Windows drivers for sound reproduction under DOS – needed for legacy games – and these can be fiddly to set up

Games Benefit 80%
Cost 68%
Ease of Installation 75%

MODEM/ISP

Taking part in The Internet Revolution requires a three-cornered hat, a pitchfork and frequent cries of "Vive le Web!". Alternatively, you can use a modem to plug into your telephone line and forget the French histrionics. A modem is the black box which converts the digital signal from your PC into an analogue sequence of beeps which can be passed down a phone-line

They come in two varieties internal and external. Unless you've used up all the expansion slots in your PC, buy an internal one. They're quicker, easier to install and generally a lot less trouble. Fit them like graphics or sound cards, install the drivers and your chosen Internet and e-mail software and you're halfway there

The other half the way is signing up to an ISP, and your best course here is to read Systems from the March issue of PC GAMER (issue 67), where I covered the first free ISPs to offer it all for nothing. There are plenty more now, including BT's own, and one run by the Express newspaper

How can you play Internet-based multi-player games or download new drivers and patches for games without a modem or terminal adaptor? Well, you can't.

As an alternative, you might like to consider ISDN, which is much faster and much more expensive than a regular BT line and uses a terminal adaptor, rather than a modem. BT's Home Highway is currently the cheapest source of this

Games Benefit 70%
Cost 75%
Ease of Installation 80%

IN CONCLUSION

With comparatively little spending you can upgrade most machines to give you faster, sharper gameplay. In order, you should think of changing your graphics adaptor, your processor, adding more memory, fitting a modem and a better sound system. If you haven't got a CD ROM drive, fit one (or a DVD) first

Most upgrades involve nothing more frightening than slotting in a new card or drive and installing drivers However, if you think you might need to make three of more changes, look at a replacement PC system unit. Once you're spending £300 or more, a new box may be the best choice

HELP!

ABORT, RETRY, FAIL...

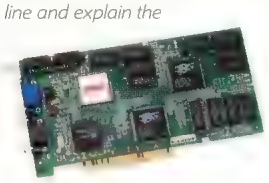
Simon 'The Fixer' Williams takes a baseball bat to a few more unruly PCs that are disrespecting their owners.

Q:> I went to buy a Maxi Gamer 3Dfx card for my P166 MMX with 64Mb RAM. I questioned its compatibility with my Diamond Stealth V2500 video card and was told there were problems with this combination. I didn't buy one, but later bought a Diamond Monster 3D from Computer Exchange Although there were problems with the V2500, I was told there was a patch on the Diamond Web site.

I installed it, but it wasn't detected by Add New Hardware or by its own CD software. I failed to find any patch at Diamond – even updating my video card drivers failed I returned my card but now CE can't get it to work, either I posted a letter at the Diamond newsgroup and found others suffering this problem too Is the only solution another new video card?

Ben Evetts, E-mail

A:> *If you're using a Diamond 3Dfx card with a Diamond video card, there's little way Diamond can pass the buck to anyone else. Ring their support line and explain the*



situation. If Computer Exchange can't get the card to be recognised, however, they should replace it

Q:> I have a Pentium II 400, 128Mb RAM and a 56K modem. However, I seem to have problems when surfing the Net Occasionally the whole process stops, and I'm forced to disconnect. I also have problems when downloading files. When I attempt to run a downloaded program, I get an error message saying the file is corrupt. I have used several ISPs including Virgin Net, BT Click Free, and many others, with similar problems

Alex Barr, E-mail

A:> *I've had this problem on occasions too, and in most cases it's been down to noise on the phone line. This is an area often not considered, but the level of crackling which may be quite tolerable for voice communications can decimate a modem connection. BT will run a check on your line if you ask and should fix it free, if there's a genuine problem.*

Q:> I need a good 2D card, but it has to be AGP. I would prefer purely 2D, but if I need to get a 2D/3D, I would. I have two Voodoo 2 cards, so I'm not too bothered about 3D

Sean O'Sullivan, E-mail

A:> *A good 2D choice would be an ATI 3D Rage in one of its many guises. They're not too expensive and will give your 2D a good boost as well as being very compatible with your Voodoo cards. A Matrox Millennium is another possibility, and with the Rainbow Runner suite has all kinds of multimedia capabilities*

ATI Rage cards offer yummy graphics. Which look like this.

Q:> I have recently bought a mobile phone and get about 20 minutes of free calls a day. Is it possible to connect this to my PC or modem so I could go on the Internet, or would I need a separate card? I do not have an infra red port.

Richard Baker, E-mail

A:> *How does your free call allowance relate to this question? No matter, you'll have to either fit an infra red port to your PC or check if your phone has a jack for connection to the serial port. If you're thinking of using the mobile with a desktop PC, it would be easier and cheaper to use it with a normal land line than with a mobile. This kind of connection is really intended for notebooks and organisers rather than desktops*

THE MONEY

Your disposable income disposed of.

LABTEC APX-4620

Labtec 01252 629900

£130

www.labtec.com

WITH speaker set ups such as this, Labtec have made a definite move into the realms of power gaming. The APX-4620 consists of two sizeable satellites and a monolithic subwoofer, which houses a six-inch bass driver. With a total of 70 watts (RMS), these speakers will fill any room with clear sound over a wide range – as low as 25Hz, in fact

The three drivers in each satellite are arranged in a 'd'appolito' configuration, with a tweeter sandwiched vertically between two mid-ranges. This is designed to remove gaps and provide smoother sound; I can't tell how they would sound otherwise, but it seems to be doing the job impeccably. The volume, treble, bass, jacks, and variable spatializer (pseudo 3D sound, useful for those without 3D audio cards) controls are well situated on the front of the right satellite. However, the on/off switch is on the back of the bass unit, which is unlikely to be in easy reach

THE VERDICT

High quality kit at a high price. These solid speakers will do justice to any sound card.

86%

LABTEC LCS-2632

Labtec 01252 629900

£100

www.labtec.com

THE baby brother of the APX-4620, the LCS-2632 offers less than half the RMS output (just 32), but is still more than adequate for most PC gamers' needs. It is also much smaller, with the subwoofer unit being much more elegant and the satellites looking much less silly when attached to the sides of your monitor. Both set ups have ingenious brackets which allow easy attachment and removal from the monitor, but I wouldn't recommend trying to use 3D sound with speakers attached in this way.

The controls – volume, treble, bass and variable Spatializer along with jacks – all sit on the front of the bass unit, ideally placed to be kicked by the clumsy of foot. Sound quality is as full and clear as the APX-4620, and has almost as good a range, though it lacks a little conviction at high volume. Positional audio worked well with the speakers placed correctly (about a foot from the monitor, slightly raised)

THE VERDICT

Labtec score again, but the price is high. The APX-4620 offers much better value.

77%

FOURPOINTSURROUND 2000 DIGITAL

Creative Labs 01245 265265

£199

www.creativelabs.com

CREATIVE and Cambridge have come up with an even better five-speaker solution which now offers digital connectivity in conjunction with SoundBlaster Live! cards with digital output. A digital connection eliminates the hiss and crackles normally experienced at high volumes, but the speakers will also work fine with other four channel cards using an analogue connection.

The four satellite speakers, though small and only boasting seven watts apiece, belie their size with good volume and clarity. Two 9-foot and two 16-foot wires allow for well spaced positioning The subwoofer unit houses all the controls, but a remote unit allows volume and front rear balance control These speakers really are the only choice if you have a SoundBlaster Live! with a digital output. With this, you'll get unparalleled sound quality with little interference, and the full benefits of Creative's EAX instructions

THE VERDICT

One of the few four-satellite set-ups available, with superb quality but a very high price.

83%

PIT

IT'S COMING FROM THE SIDES...

Positional audio is the latest big thing. Games which are specially written to do so can now position sound left, right, front, back – and even above and below – the listener. Imagine you're playing *Half-Life*, and you can actually hear where the soldiers are as they outflank you and take up positions overhead. Of course, the correct hardware is essential, but having four speakers isn't. The Vortex 2 chipset (featured in the MX300 below) and the Creative Live! are able to replicate positional audio using two speakers, but some offer better performance than others. Here are some of the best value audio solutions the industry has to offer.

Got your 3D graphics sorted? Good. But don't put away that credit card just yet – it's time for the 3D audio revolution. **By ROSS ATHERTON**

'MAGIC SPEAKER' SMS-8320

Pine/Samsung 01908 218812

£17.50

www.pinegroup.com

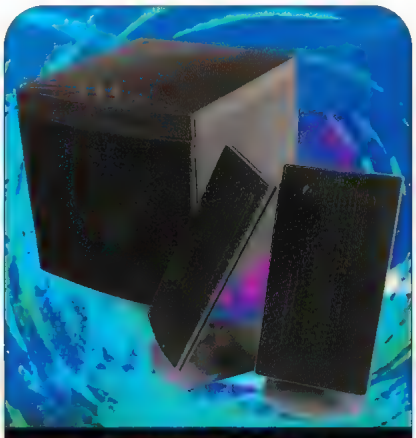
I'M absolutely charmed by these rather elegant speakers, and that's largely due to the incredibly low price tag. For less than the price of 44 bags of Flamin' Hot Monster Munch, you can get a pair of very adequate Samsung badged speakers which far out perform other budget models.

Each speaker includes a Kevlar-coated 3-inch woofer and a small tweeter; the total RMS output is claimed to be 30 watts RMS. These speakers won't fill a large room, and they're tinny at low volume, but that's compared to speakers ten times the price. Aesthetically, they're the most adventurous of the bunch, but the detachable fabric-covered grilles are liable to get very mucky under sweaty paws They're also top-heavy, but if you're careful, the small bases should serve you well. On/off, volume, treble and balance controls are well-placed atop the right speaker and are solid and functional. However, they won't do justice to your new 3D audio accelerator.

THE VERDICT

Astonishingly priced budget bargain, with pleasing sound quality and good looks to boot.

90%



MONSOON MM-1000

Sonigistix 0171 4133000

£179

www.sonigistix.com

THIS good-looking set-up comprises a cube-shaped bass unit and two virtually flat 12.5 watt (RMS) satellites. Their flatness is achieved by the use of planar magnetic transducers. They are designed to sit on your desk and point upwards toward your ears, so they don't do a great space-saving job. If correctly placed, however, the set-up gives a good impression of 3D sound as the transducers cut down on sound interference normally associated with cones

The bass unit houses a 25 watt (RMS) bass cone and also the main controls (volume, bass and bass boost) on the top front edge. This position isn't ideal, but there is a remote control 'puck' unit housing a volume control and a very handy mute button. The bass unit is lacking a proper on/off switch, so to put the lights out you have to pull the plug. The set-up offers poorer sound outside the sweet spot (which should be right in front of the monitor)

THE VERDICT

Excellent quality and good use of fancy technology, but still at a very high price.

79%

MONSTER SOUND MX300

Diamond Multimedia 01189 444477

£59

www.diamondmm.com

THERE'S a quiet revolution happening in the world of sound cards. In the wake of 3D graphics comes the onset of 3D sound, and Aureal's Vortex 2 chipset is at the forefront of this new technology. A3D 2.0 is the API (or driver language) which powers cards using the chipset, and it allows for unprecedented sound quality and positional audio

Eager to put the MX300 through its paces, I fired up *Half-Life* and the difference was immediately noticeable. With good speakers correctly set up (the card will work with two or four speakers plus subwoofer) or headphones, sounds are accurately placed all around you, including above and below to a certain extent. Reflections and occlusions are also the card's flagship features, and work superbly. The only other technology in the same class is the Creative SoundBlaster Live! with its Environmental Audio API. However, the MX300 is considerably cheaper.

THE VERDICT

The future of gaming audio. Combine it with good speakers for the best sound available.

94%

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CDGAMER

On the discs of pleasure this month we bring you massive demos of *MechWarrior 3*, *Official Formula 1 Racing*, *Braveheart*, *Rally Championship* and two top-quality music programs. So get going!

DEMO OF THE MONTH

MECHWARRIOR 3

MICROPROSE

Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Huge playable demo of *MechWarrior 3*, featuring an 'Instant Action' mission where you must take on multiple waves of enemies. As you destroy each wave, the next one is tougher and more difficult to defeat. The demo ends when you are destroyed. You can read our in-depth review of *MechWarrior 3* on page 92.

CONTROLS:
Up/Down Arrow – Forward/Reverse
Left/Right Arrow – Turn Left/Right
-/+ – Pitch Torso Up/Down
</> – Twist Torso Left/Right

WEAPON COMMANDS:
Spacebar – Fire Weapon
Enter – Cycle Weapons
Ctrl &] – Cycle Next Weapon Group
\ – Toggle Chain/Single/Group Fire
F1 Trough F5 – Select Weapon Group 1 to 5
Shift & F1 Through F5 – Set Weapon Group 1 to 5
Numpad Enter – Alpha Strike

MECH COMMANDS:
O – Override Auto Shutdown
S – Shutdown/Startup
F – Flush Coolant System
G – Get up from fall
C – Crouch/Stand
/ – Centre Torso to Legs

TARGET COMMANDS:
Q – Select Target Under Reticle
E – Select Next Enemy
Shift & E – Select Previous Enemy
Ctrl & E – Select Nearest Enemy

THROTTLE COMMANDS:
1 Through 0 – Throttle Stages 0% to 100%

JUMP JET CONTROLS:
J – Jump Jets
Home – Jump Jet Forward
End – Jump Jet Reverse
Del – Jump Jet Left
Page Down – Jump Jet Right

COCKPIT CONTROLS:
R – Select Radar Display
Shift & R – Radar/Map Toggle
Alt & R – Select Passive/Active Radar
D – Damage Display
H – HUD Toggle

OFFICIAL FORMULA 1 RACING

EIDOS INTERACTIVE

Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Pick a car from any of the current teams and compete in a five lap race of the infamous Suzuka circuit in Japan in this playable demo.

DRIVING:
Left/Right Arrows – Steer Left/Right
Up/Down Arrows – Accelerate/Brake
Shift/Ctrl – Change Gear Up/Down
Numpad + & – – Modify front and rear brake balance

CONTROLS:
Display Options (while driving):
F1 – Resolution from 320x200 to 1024x768
F4 – 3D Optimisation Optimised/Maximal quality
F5 – Pop-up windows Toggle
F6 – Mirrors Off/Medium/Full

GAME OPTIONS:
F7 – Sound On/Off
F8 – Race information On/Off
F9 – TV Information On/Off
F10 – Track Map On/Off

CAMERAS:
Home – Cockpit driving camera (4 views)
Page Up – External driving camera (can be adjusted using Numpad)
Page Down – Fixed on board cameras (6 views)
Delete – TV track side cameras
End – Helicopter camera
Insert – Dynamic cameras (3 types in cockpit and external cameras)
Scroll lock – Top view cameras
NUMPAD – External camera positioning

DEMOS

Note the sneaky Chris Evans-oriented advertising.

ACTUA ICE HOCKEY 2
GREMLIN INTERACTIVE
Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95, 4Mb D3D-compatible accelerator

Try an exhibition match between the New Jersey Angels and the Philadelphia Falcons in this demo of Gremlin's new ice hockey sequel.

CONTROLS:
Arrow Keys – Directional Player Control
, – Shoot
. – Pass/Poke Check/Select Nearest Player
/ – Speed Burst
F1 – Replay
F2 – Camera Menu
F3 – Flip Camera Direction
F4 – Change Camera Target
F5 – Home Team Tactics
F6 – Home Team Lines
F7 – Away Team Tactics
F8 – Away Team Lines
Esc – Pause

EVIL CORE: THE FALLEN CITIES
ABTS
Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Updated demo of this 3D shooter that features a new single-player level and the addition of multi-player combat.

CONTROLS:
Numpad 7/9 – Turn Left/Right
Numpad 8/2 – Dive/Climb
Numpad 4/6 – Roll Left/Right
L – Lock Target
U – Unlock Target
Spacebar – Fire Guns
M – Fire Missile
B – Turbo
Numpad +/- – Increase/decrease speed
F4 – Configure Keyboard
F2 – Customize Joystick/Gamepad
F3 – List Keyboard Commands
F7 – 3rd Person View
F8 – 1st Person View
Page Up – Brighten Display
Page Down – Darken Display
Tab – Pause

GROMADA
BUKA ENTERTAINMENT
Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Three-level demo of this new futuristic arcade tank combat game.

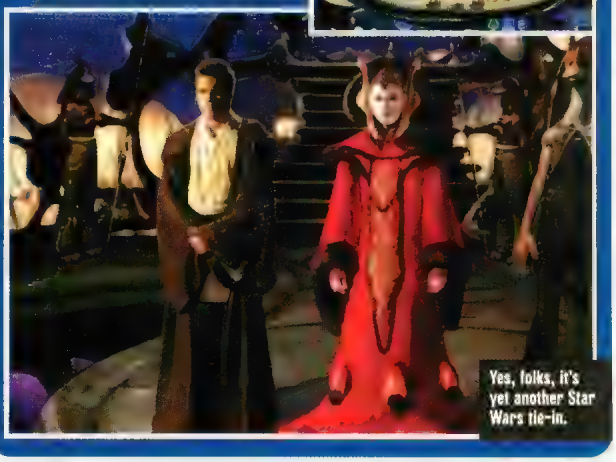
CONTROLS:
Left Mouse Click – Move
Right Mouse Click – Attack
1 – 4 – Weapon Change
Arrow Keys – Alternative move controls
TAB – Turn status bar on/off

Evil Core in its full 3D glory.

THE GUNGAN FRONTIER
LUCAS LEARNING/UBI SOFT
Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Find out about the creatures inhabiting the worlds featured in the new Star Wars film with this interactive demo of *The Gungan Frontier*.

CONTROLS:
A to Z – When in Index or Kresch, quick-select the entry that starts with that letter
Arrow Keys – Scroll surface/city view
Left/Right Arrows – Previous/Next in the Kresch
Up/Down Arrows – Previous/Next in Index
F1 – Toggles Bubble Help on/off


Yes, folks, it's yet another Star Wars tie-in.

KILLER TANK
ELECTROTECH MULTIMEDIA
Pentium 233, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95, 3Dfx Accelerator Card

Demo includes three missions from the first campaign: Live Sentence, Join the Parade and Big Canyon.

CONTROLS:
Up/Down Arrow – Forward/Back
Left/Right Arrow – Turn Left/Right
Insert – Change Point of View
Enter – Use Item
Mouse Movement – Tank Turret Control
Left Mouse Button – Fire Primary
Right Mouse Button – Fire Secondary
1 – Assign Rocket Launcher as Secondary Weapon
2 – Assign Laser Gun as Secondary Weapon
3 – Assign Flamer Gun as Secondary Weapon
Tab – Map

PUMA STREET SOCCER
INFOGRAMES
Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Play an exhibition match between England and Italy.

CONTROLS:
Arrow Keys – Player Directional Control
Arrows & S – Dash
A – Shoot (Keep pressed to adjust power and arrows to direct)
Z/X – Dribble
D – Pass
D & Arrow – Directional Pass
W & Arrow – Cross
W & Arrow (Quick press) – Lob
A – Tackle (When not in possession)
Q – Sliding Tackle
Goal Keeper Control:
D & Arrow – Short Dive
W & Arrow – Long Dive

RAILROAD TYCOON II: THE SECOND CENTURY
TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE
Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

A three-scenario demo of the first expansion pack for *Railroad Tycoon II*.

CONTROLS:
Mouse Movement – Move Cursor
Left Mouse Button – Make Selection

RUSSIAN ROULETTE 2
BUKA ENTERTAINMENT
Pentium 200, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

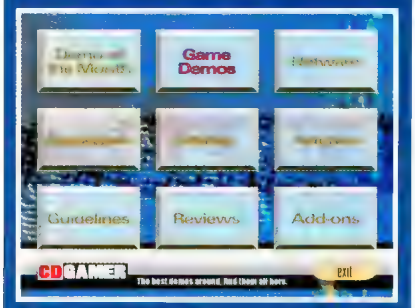
Try out an early level from this 3D first-person shooter.

THE WINDOWS 95 MENU

Insert the CD-ROM into your drive and the CD GAMER menu program will 'autorun' (so long as you have this Windows 95 feature enabled) and after a few seconds you will be presented with an introduction screen. You are then invited to 'Run the menu'. Selecting this option will launch the CD GAMER menu program. From here you can install this month's selection of game demos and access the reviews database and guidelines sections.

GAME OF THE MONTH
Click here to go straight to the game of the month.

RETURN TO WINDOWS
If, for some reason, the menu program does not automatically start, perhaps the autorun feature is disabled on your system. Go to the START/RUN command on the taskbar and type D:\PCG.EXE (where D is the letter of your CD-ROM drive).



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If your CD is defective, please return it to the address below. Please make sure you have followed our installation procedures correctly before you send it back to us to ensure that there is a physical problem. Please send the CD along with a description of the fault together with a self addressed envelope to the address below. Return postage will be paid.

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A CD should only need replacing if the CD itself cannot be read. If, instead, you are experiencing problems with an individual demo or application, phone the number below and ask for our technical support line. This is open between 9.30am and 6pm from Monday to Friday.

Tel 01225 442244 (Ask for Technical Support)
Fax 01225 732279
E-mail: support@futurenet.co.uk

Please note that the help-line staff provide assistance with technical problems directly related to our cover CD and cannot provide training on software or hardware in general.

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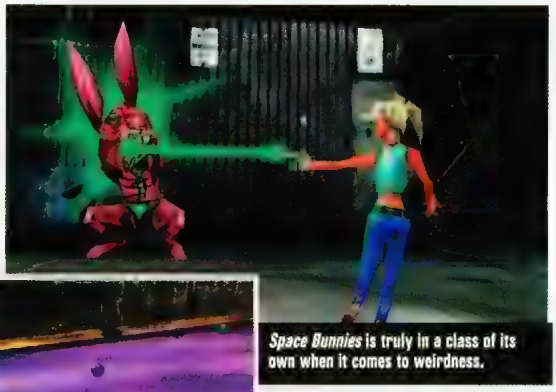
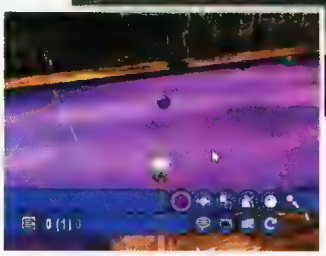
⇨ Numpad 4/6 – Turn Left/Right
Numpad 8/5 – Look Up/Down
Numpad 9/7 – Roll Left/Right
E/D – Forward/Backward
S/F – Strafe Left/Right
T/G – Strafe Up/Down
Q – Forceage
W – Stop
Space – Jump
Numpad 2 – Centre View
1/3 – Turret Left/Right
F1 – Change Vehicle
Left Mouse Button or Left Ctrl – Fire Primary Weapon
Right Mouse Button or Enter – Fire Secondary Weapon
M – Map



Space Bunnies is truly in a class of its own when it comes to weirdness.



SHATTERED LIGHT
SIMON & SCHUSTER
Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Playable demo of *Shattered Light*, the fantasy role-playing game designed for both Internet and single-player gameplay. You begin play by teleporting into the Great Square of the city of Terris. If you head south, you will come across the bazaar where you can purchase equipment and supplies.

CONTROLS:
Mouse Movement – Move Cursor
Left Mouse Button – Select Option
1,2,3,4,5 – Change View
R – Reset Car Position
Esc – Pause
F12 – Screenshot

THRUST, TWIST & TURN
TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE
Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

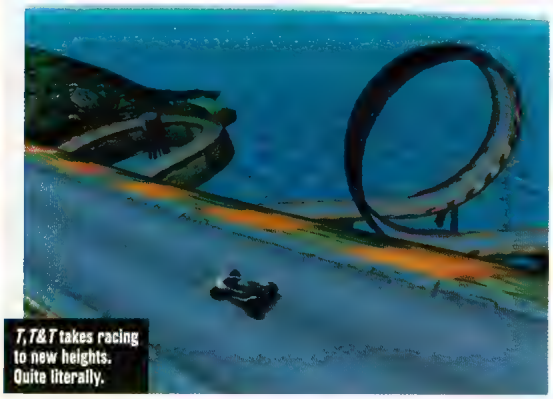
Hurtle around the sky-high road of the city track in your futuristic Sharptu Nah car in this playable demo of Take 2's new racer.

CONTROLS:
Left/Right Arrow – Steer Left/Right
Up/Down Arrow – Accelerate/Brake
Ctrl – Turbo Boost
Shift – Faster Turn

SPACE BUNNIES MUST DIE
RIPCORD GAMES
Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

One level from this *Tomb Raider*-style third-person adventure where you must battle past the evil space bunnies. Obviously.

CONTROLS:
Up Arrow – Run Forward
Down Arrow – Walk Backward
Left/Right – Turn Left/Right
Shift & Up Arrow – Walk Forward
Left Ctrl – Draw Weapons
Space – Activate/Fire
A – Jump
Z – Crouch
Numpad 0 – Free Look Mode
Alt & Space & Left/Right Arrow – Strafe Left/Right
Tab – Cycle Through Inventory
Enter – Use Inventory Item
D – Dance



T,T&T takes racing to new heights. Quite literally.

TREASURE ISLAND
CRYSTAL SOFTWARE
Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Swash your buckles with this 2D platformer from new game publisher, Crystal Software.

CONTROLS:
Left/Right Arrow – Move Left/Right
Up/Down Arrow – Jump/Crouch
Ctrl – Slash Sword
Alt – Throw
Space – Operate

ULTIMATE 8 BALL
THQ
Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Demo featuring a single-player match against a large skinhead affectionately called 'Ed Case'.

CONTROLS:
Hold Right Mouse Button & Move Mouse – Line-up Shot
Hold Left Mouse Button & Move Mouse – Take Shot

XTOM 3D
JAMIE SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT
Pentium 200, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95, OpenGL Compatible Accelerator

The first CD GAMER demo from Korea, and it's a classic, scrolling-style shoot-'em-up using the latest OpenGL capabilities of the modern graphics accelerator. If you have any difficulties running the game and your system meets the requirements, try copying the file MSVCRTD.DLL from the \GAMES\XTOM3D directory of the CD to your \WINDOWS\SYSTEM directory.

CONTROLS:
Arrows – Player 1 Directional Control
W,S,A,D – Player 2 Directional Control

[/] – Player 1 Primary/Secondary Fire
Left Shift/Left Ctrl – Player 2 Primary/Secondary Fire
Esc – Configuration Menu

SHADOW COMPANY
INTERACTIVE MAGIC
Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

First previewed in PCG 62, *Shadow Company* finally makes it to your screens. This demo sees you in command of three mercenaries on a vital mission in Central Africa. press F1 during play to get a list of your immediate objectives.

CONTROLS:
Tab – Show Mission Objectives
F1 – Show Key Help
Ctrl & P – Pause Game
Ctrl & X – Exit Game
F12 – Screen Capture
F11 – Select All Mercenaries
F9 – Select Previous Mercenary
F10 – Select Next Mercenary
1 – 8 – Mercenary Hot Keys
Space – Toggle Mercenary Inventory Console
S – Stand
C – Crouch
P – Go Prone
H – Halt
O – Overwatch
Alt & Left Mouse Button – Rotate
D – Drop Object/Body
Shift & Left Mouse Button – Force Fire (Primary Weapon)
Shift & Right Mouse Button – Force Fire (Secondary Weapon)
E – Exit Vehicle
Ctrl & S – Select Next Formation
Ctrl & F – Form Next Formation
Ctrl & Z – Binocular Mode
Ctrl & A – Sniper Mode
Ctrl & C – Camera Mode
Numpad +/- – Camera Height Up/Down
Numpad 4/6 – Camera Track Left/Right
Numpad 8/5 – Camera Move Forward/Backward
Numpad 1/3 – Camera Tilt Up/Down
Numpad 9/7 – Rotate Camera Clockwise/Anti-Clockwise
Numpad 0/. – Camera Pan Left/Right
Ctrl & -/+ – Decrease/Increase Field of View
T – Track Selected Mercenary Vehicle Control:
Up/Down Arrow – Move Forward/Backward
Left Right Arrow – Turn Left/Right

CD GAMER 2

BRAVEHEART
EIDOS INTERACTIVE
Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95

Exclusive playable demo of last month's Game of the Month, *Braveheart*. Two missions await you; the first is a 'stealth' mission where you must raid a village for weapons, and the second is an all-out battle on the Scottish moors.

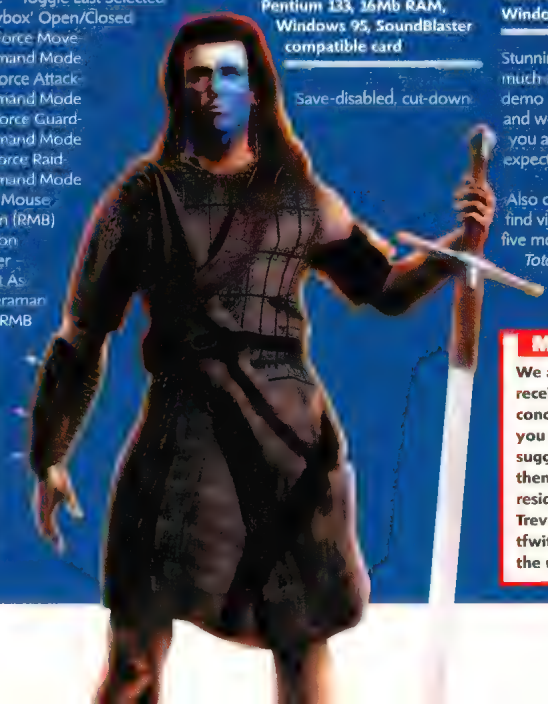
The first mission can be a little tough so here are a few pointers. First, locate the local militia leader (the orange blob on the radar). You should find him near a small hut with around six guards, and you must dispatch them all without raising the alarm in the rest of the village.

Now, the troops guarding the weapons store will move to the militia leader's position. Once you have secured the weapons, you can select 'abandon field' to complete the first mission.

CONTROLS:
F1 – Soldiers Eye View
F2 – Follow Camera
F3 – Battle Camera
F4 – Static Battle Camera
F5 – Free Camera
Arrows – Move Camera Focus
1 To 0 – Select Unit in 'Armybox'
Left Shift & 1 To 0 – Set Cameraman To Member Of Unit in Army box
Left Ctrl & 1 To 6 – Toggle Armybox 1 To 6 Open/Closed
Space – Toggle Last Selected 'Armybox' Open/Closed
M – Force Move Command Mode
A – Force Attack Command Mode
G – Force Guard Command Mode
R – Force Raid Command Mode
Right Mouse Button (RMB) Click on Soldier – Select As Cameraman
Drag RMB Left/Right – Rotate Camera Left/Right
Drag RMB Up/Down – Zoom Camera In/Out
Left Shift & Drag RMB Up/Down – Lift/Lower Camera Angle
Left Mouse Click (LMB) on Soldier – Toggle Soldier Selection
Drag LMB – Group Select Soldiers
Left Alt & Drag LMB – Group Delete from Selection
Left Ctrl & Drag LMB – Group Add to Selection
Left Windows Button – Stack Commands

HIP HOP E-JAY
FASTTRACK
Pentium 133, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95, SoundBlaster compatible card

Save-disabled, cut-down version of this impressive music package used by Matt in this month's music feature. As MC Chafe, he was able to lay down some dope beats; see if you can match him.



DANCE E-JAY 2
FASTTRACK
Pentium 133, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95, SoundBlaster compatible sound

A real favourite of the GAMER team, this one. Kieron is currently using it to make moves on the Ministry of Sound and the Top 40. Check out this demo version and then look at the special offer on the CD to find out how you can get the full product along with a free 'sample kit'.

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP
EUROPRESS
Pentium 166, 32Mb RAM, Windows 95, 3D accelerator

Stunning rolling demo of this much anticipated rally title. The demo features several cars, tracks and weather conditions to give you a real taster of what you can expect from the finished product.

Also on CD GAMER 2 you can find videos and rolling demos of five more hot new titles, *Shogun: Total War*, *Fire & Darkness*, *Fly!*, *Ultima Ascension* and *Dungeon Keeper 2*.

MAIL US!

We are always interested to receive feedback from you concerning our cover CDs. If you have any comments or suggestions for future discs then please contact our resident CD-ROM editor, Trevor Witt, by e-mail on tfwitt@futurenet.co.uk or at the usual postal address.

CD GAMER FULL CONTENT LIST:
KEY: DISC 1 • DISC 2

GAME DEMOS:
Braveheart
MechWarrior 3
Official Formula 1 Racing
Thrust, Twist & Turn
Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Gungan Frontier
Actua Ice Hockey 2
Descent 3
Evil Core
Gromada
Killer Tank
Puma Street Soccer
Railroad Tycoon II
Russian Roulette 2
Shattered Light
Space Bunnies Must Die
Treasure Island
Ultimate 8 Ball
Xtom 3D
Shadow Company

SHAREWARE:
Arkanoid Win 32
Dweebs
Monkey Shines
The Unholy

NETWARE:
Wireplay
WebFerret
Demon Internet (One month's free Net access)
GameSpy 3D
GetRight
NetGames UK
WebTribe

QUAKE 2 ADD-ONS:
Dawn Of Darkness
Zaero

PATCHES:
Brian Lara Cricket
Close Combat III
Falcon 4
Gangsters
Lands Of Lore III
Myth: The Fallen Lords
NASCAR Revolution
Unreal
Ultimate Race Pro
Warzone 2100

FEATURE – PC GAMER'S CRIMINAL RECORDS:
Hip Hop E-Jay (Demo)
Dance E-Jay 2 (Demo)
7 music tracks created by the GAMER team.

ROLLING DEMOS:
Rally Championship
Fire & Darkness
Fly!
Shogun: Total War
Dungeon Keeper 2
Ultima Ascension

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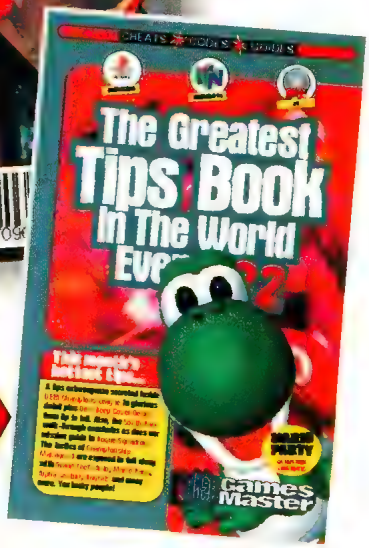

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ALL-NEW IT WAS A TIME OF DARKNESS

by TB Falsename Episode Two

PREVIOUSLY ON "IT WAS A TIME OF DARKNESS":

The faraway town of Akansaxchukabuk is under attack from the army of Grimsaxhaibailak, led by master of maajikcke and çauçyry, General Redmax. Civic leaders and sworn enemies Saxinraxin, Raxinfraxin and Dixdastardlax have put aside their differences to fight the common foe, but the situation is desperate.

Meanwhile, after a series of clever adventures and perilous jokes, Princess Breasts, Inspector Petit-Pivic and the wood spirit Ash have gained entrance to the divine house of the gods.

Now read on.

(Scene: Akansaxchukabuk. Night. Flames leap all around. The people, inspired by the hastily made-up speeches of Captain Raxinfraxin and Dixdastardlax the wizard, surge towards the main gate to defend their town. Suddenly a single man blocks their path, thanks to poor road design and low aggregate speed.)

MAN: Stop! The time for these outdated notions is over. *(There is a general murmur.)* I see we have General Murmur here tonight. Pish, man, I believe I know that whereof now is which I speak. *(There are a couple of gasps.)* Yes, I see that the Gasp Twins have gleaned that I am educated in the language of perplexity. Possibly you recognise me – my name is Guy, and I control the Sunday market trade.

WOMAN IN CROWD: Market Executive Guy!

GUY: That's right, friends, and I'm here to tell you that this model of warfare is embarrassingly outdated. Look at yourselves. You're positively neolithic. You want something fresh – new – exciting – cresting the verge of fighting technology – the next big thing. Friends, you want – Big Fighters Plus One.

(He moves aside to reveal that the market square beyond the narrow street is bedecked in bright colours. Standing on a raised stage are four figures, clad in shiny armour. The people shuffle into the square, cooing over the novel creatures, the Grimsaxhaibailak forces all but forgotten. Fortuitously, the army's been tricked in an earlier episode into settling in for a siege instead of charging through the walls, so that's all right then.) (And the flames are under control and everything.)

GUY: So new they're not quite finished, and armed with the latest, widest tubes.

WOMAN FROM CROWD: They seem to catch the light a lot. I'm frequently dazzled.

GUY: Entirely deliberate. And through special arrangement with the Organist of the Universe, they exist in an incredible three dimensions simultaneously. All powered by a secret and marvellous mechanism. Yes, it seems to be a coal fire to you, friend, but it holds far more coal than ever before. And listen to this. *(He signals to one of the creatures.)*

CREATURE: Yo! I'll kick your donkey, for I am a rock.

MAN FROM CROWD: Those nasal, boorish tones – I'm filled with the desire to emulate them. And to wear brown. Do they strike with terrible swiftness?

GUY: Actually, it's more of a steady advance. Be fair, it's a lot to carry about. And if you find the creatures subconsciously tempting, you can purchase time with one for a licentiousness fee.

MAN 218: They have no arms, legs or head. We learned this was unhelpful in battle at heavy cost in the Six Wars that Enveloped the World.

GUY: Sorry, the what? Must have been before my time. Now who'll be first to buy? *(Giant food plunges from the sky, totally destroying the creatures.)* Tchhh, I was already working on a further next big thing anyway. *(A huge goblet follows the food, smashing him into paste.)*

(Cut to the divine house of the gods. Ash and Petit-Pivic hover anxiously as Princess Breasts clutches her wrist where it's been grasped in greeting by the God of Exuberance. Items roll around the floor where the Princess has jumped back into a laden table in shock.)

PRINCESS: Well, I'm sorry, but I had no idea it would be so heavy-handed.

(Everyone looks in the same direction for a moment.)

ASH: So anyway.

TO BE CONTINUED...

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STARSIEGE
UNIVERSE

This game is easily the best of the lot, across the whole board. It's beautiful, engrossing, exciting, full of rich story in a sweeping universe, and most important, it's a blast to play.
Gamecenter ★★★★★ *Paul Schuytema for a while, served as lead designer for MechWarrior 3*

'Frantic armoured action in Starsiege and unparalleled on-line multiplayer gaming via Tribes... a truly explosive combination'

'Starsiege could give the Mechwarrior universe a big headache'

PCGW

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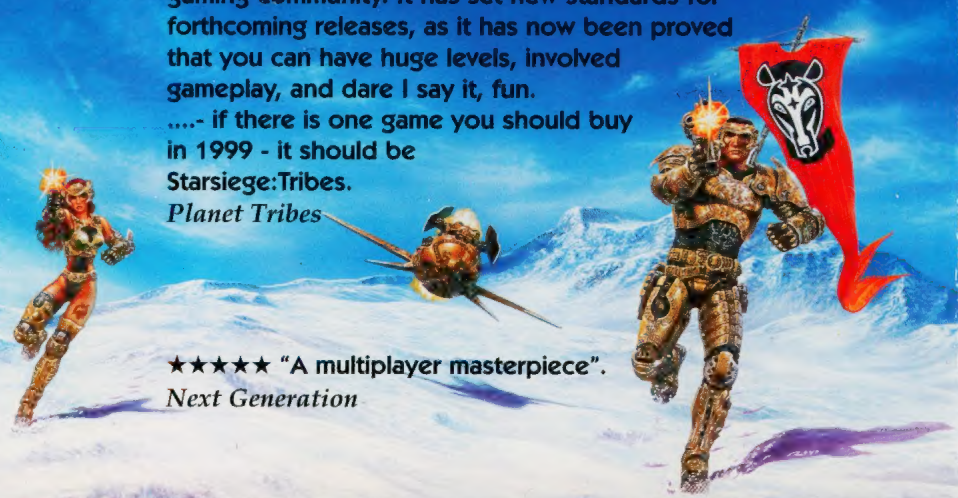
STARSIEGE
TRIBES

...One of the most popular internet games in existence.
...grab a copy of this game while you can and get stuck in, trust me you won't be disappointed.
93% – Gamerush

'Tribes is a strong contender for multiplayer game of the year'
PCGW

Quite simply; Starsiege: Tribes has revitalised the on-line gaming community. It has set new standards for forthcoming releases, as it has now been proved that you can have huge levels, involved gameplay, and dare I say it, fun.
....- if there is one game you should buy in 1999 - it should be Starsiege:Tribes.
Planet Tribes

★★★★★ "A multiplayer masterpiece".
Next Generation



SIERRA

www.sierra-online.co.uk
www.starsiege.com

Starsiege minimum req's: P133 with graphics accelerator or P166 without graphics accelerator.
Tribes minimum req's: P166 32MB ram with graphics accelerator or P200 32MB ram without graphics accelerator, Lan card or minimum 28.8 kps modem, Network support Internet, TCP / IP, IPX.

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